



OFFICE OF THE ASSESSOR COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

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SANTOS H. KREIMANN
CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR

March 7, 2013

Greetings,

The County of Los Angeles Office of the Assessor has a long and well-regarded reputation as an important and very professional public agency. In the 163 years since the first County Assessor A.F. Coronel was elected to serve in the newly-formed County of Los Angeles government, the Office has grown into the largest and most innovative property assessment agency in the nation.

For generations, the Office has provided the vital work that is essential to helping maintain a strong fiscal foundation for the County of Los Angeles. Over time, we led the way in developing the finest appraisal experts, professional staff and technical expertise to successfully manage the important task of valuing property in the nation's largest county.

The Office has spent most of its existence contently obscure – out of the limelight, and focused on developing its expertise in serving the public. However, it hasn't been without its moments of controversy. It is in the wake of a recent controversy that necessitated rigorous self-evaluation with an eye toward reform and setting a new course for the future.

The development of this Strategic Plan has been a rewarding journey, not only for me, but for all those who participated. All employees had the opportunity to weigh-in on the Plan; and most did – often quite candidly. We learned along the way what worked and what didn't. Innovative ideas and solutions to festering problems and challenges were presented from employees at all levels of the organization and are reflected in this document.

Importantly, this process, focused on our vision of making the Office of the Assessor the "premier property assessment agency in the nation," helped remind and reassure all of us that we are a committed and professional company of public servants who take our responsibility to the County and its people very seriously. In the end, the controversy has made us stronger and more focused on our purpose, mission, values and vision.

Santos H. Kreimann

March 7, 2013

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We worked hard and collaboratively to define those values that best represent our Office. Our values help define how we will act in achieving our mission. We will act consistent with our values and uphold the highest ethical standards. We support all of the County values and emphasize the importance of specific County values: Accountability, Professional, Integrity, and Respect.

Given the nature of the Office of the Assessor, we have added Service and Equity. Together, they challenge us to A.S.P.I.R.E.:

Accountability

Service Excellence

Professionalism

Integrity

Respect

Equity

The Strategic Plan has also laid-out a framework for our work efforts for the next two years in a series of Action Plans covering issues of ethics, cultural change, forecasting, metrics and accountability, process review, organizational structure, public affairs, succession planning, and information technology.

The Strategic Plan and Action Plans together represent the foundation of the fundamental changes that are taking place and that will continue to take place in the Office of the Assessor. I invite and encourage each of you to play a role in this change and do your part to help us realize our mission and vision.

I would like to thank everyone throughout the organization who collectively invested countless hours of reflection, study and discussion to develop this Plan. It will be a guiding document that serves as a road map in transforming our Office and its operations for the benefit of the public who depend on our services. It will also serve as a roadmap to our future and reflects our common desire to earn the trust of the public we serve by providing them the best service we are capable of providing.

We look forward to partnering with all of our stakeholders as we carry-out our vision to be the "premier property assessment agency in the nation."

Sincerely,



SANTOS H. KREIMANN

SHK:JP:tt



*Valuing People
and Property*

OFFICE OF THE ASSESSOR

County of Los Angeles



STRATEGIC PLAN 2013 - 2015

March 2013



*Valuing People
and Property*

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Action Planning Team Membership

Nurturing an Ethical Culture

Strategic Champion: Executive Team

KH Facilitator: Gayla Kraetsch Hartsough

APT Members:

Juliet Apfel	Paul Cunnane	Jeff Osaka	George Welch
Mary Jane Baysa	Mark Hashima	Jeffrey Prang	
Jennifer Budzak	Dale Hough	David Trimmell	

Fiscal Forecasting Model

Strategic Champion: George Renkei and Sharon Moller

KH Facilitator: Gayla Kraetsch Hartsough

APT Members:

Rob Apanay	Frederick Chisholm	Sharon Moller	Scott Thornberry
Julie Apfel	Kurt Gensicke	George Renkei	

Positive Culture Transformation

Strategic Champion: Frederick Chisholm, Director, Roll Services

KH Facilitator: Heather Sims Silva

APT Members:

Javon Brown	Robert Cooney	Tracy Harris	Emilio Solano
Esperanza Cajulis	Anthony Crump	Tracy Rekart	Chrystal Taylor
Kevin Chan	Patrick Gibson	Iranita Scott-Lewis	Joel Vicente

Human Capital and Organizational Development

Strategic Champion: Steven Hernandez

KH Facilitator: Gayla Kraetsch Hartsough

APT Members:

Julie Apfel	Paul Cunnane	Dale Hough	George Renkei
Mary Jane Baysa	Brian Donnelly	Santos Kreimann	David Trimmell
Jennifer Budzak	Kurt Gensicke	Sharon Moller	George Welch
Fred Chisholm	Mark Hashima	Jeff Osaka	

Strategic Plan 2013-2015

Technology

Strategic Champion: Kurt Gensicke

KH Facilitator: Bob Schilling

APT Members:

Victor Beauchamp	Rafael Chepeian	David Maw	Ken Ryozaiki
Dave Breault	Michael Doom	Garo Megerdichian	Joey Sampana
Eric Cabrera	Jet Krantz	Yvan Rodriguez	Phil Vialpando

Public Affairs and Communications Team

KH Facilitator: Gayla Kraetsch Hartsough

APT Members:

Anthony Crump	Carol Quan	Louis Reyes
Jeffrey Prang	El Cid De Ramus	Christina Sciupac

Policies and Processes

Strategic Champion: Sharon Moller

KH Facilitator: Charlotte Maure

APT Members:

Juliet Abdelshehid	Owen Harris	Hilde Linn	Laura Winslow
Dat Dang	Matthew Herrera	Chrystal Taylor	
Brent Decker	Dale Hough	Jose Tovar	

Metrics and Accountability

Strategic Champion: George Renkei

KH Facilitator: Charlotte Maure

APT Members:

Rob Apanay	Candace Gee	Neil Najjar	Dave Trimmell
Julie Apfel	Jim Kulbacki	Frank Pavon	
Brian Donnelly	Hilde Linn	Scott Thornberry	

County of Los Angeles Office of the Assessor



*Valuing People
and Property*

Strategic Plan 2013-2015

Part I. Strategic Plan Overview



County of Los Angeles Office of the Assessor

Strategic Plan Overview

Valuing Los Angeles County

The County of Los Angeles, with a population of more than 10 million people, has more residents than any other county in the nation. Within its boundaries are 88 cities.

What We Do

The Los Angeles County Office of the Assessor (Assessor or Office) locates and identifies all taxable property in this vast Los Angeles County, establishes taxable value for all property subject to property taxation, completes the Annual Assessment Roll showing the assessed values of all properties, and applies all legal exemptions.

Assessment Roll Value

According to the Assessor's Office 2012 Annual Report¹, the Office reported 2012's assessment roll as \$1,130,560,769,770 gross total – \$24.8 billion greater than the previous year. The 2.24% increase represents the second straight year of growth in the total property assessment roll.

The gross total roll is compiled prior to deducting tax-exempt assessments, as well as the state-reimbursed homeowners' exemption. After these deductions, the net roll total for Los Angeles County is \$1.079 trillion, a 2.2% net increase from last year's net roll total.

The reported growth is great news for the County and local governments, schools, and special districts in Los Angeles County and a sign of continued economic recovery. Growth in assessed property values result in local governments collecting additional tax revenues for public services, such as police, fire, and schools.

The City of Los Angeles was the highest assessed valued municipality in the county at \$419.127 billion, which is a 2.5% growth from last year. The second highest valued city is Long Beach at \$44.104 billion, followed by Santa Monica, Torrance, and Glendale.

The City of Beverly Hills benefited from the highest percentage change in value with 6.5% positive growth. Other cities in Los Angeles County with high percentage change include Rolling Hills at 6.0%, Bradbury at 5.0%, San Marino at 4.9%, and Arcadia and Monterey Park at 4.7%.

Who We Are

For most County residents, the assessment of property is an almost invisible function, even though public information is available about the Assessor's operations. The Office's 1,400 employees prepare the assessment roll each year, which includes 2.4 million homes and businesses. They are in charge of the process of administering the assessed values and responding to appeals. They work with third-party advocates, and are knowledgeable of the process, skilled in its nuances, and familiar with the Assessment Appeals Board procedures.

¹ <http://assessor.lacounty.gov/extranet/news/rollrls2012.pdf>

Immediate Challenges

Public Trust

The Assessor's Office is at a pivotal time and needs to become more accountable, efficient, and effective. The controversy that has occupied the Assessor's Office for nearly a year has raised questions and allegations of impropriety in its policies and practices. The investigations have brought into question: a) the integrity and fairness of the assessment process, and b) the motivations, actions, and honesty of some individuals within the Office and others associated with it.

The increased scrutiny has also served to reveal a number of systematic and structural deficiencies within the organization. Simultaneously, property tax revenues, as well as dependent special assessments, had declined during a period of great fiscal and economic challenges.

In these difficult circumstances, it is imperative that public trust in the Assessor's Office and the services it provides be restored.

Board of Supervisor's Actions

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (BOS) has taken a number of actions, including:

- Directing the Auditor-Controller to conduct a management audit of the Assessor's operations
- Nominating the Director of the Department of Beaches and Harbors to manage the Assessor's Office as Chief Deputy Assessor on an interim basis.

The BOS has expressed its concerns about the Office's finances; business, administrative and procurement practices; internal controls; and information systems. The BOS wants to ensure that the Assessor's Office is properly and efficiently administering the County's property assessment and appeals functions and exercising appropriate management oversight of its operations and employees.

Need for a Shared Vision and Strategy

The Office was fragmented, lacking a unified vision, a defined set of goals, and an engaged work force. The prior Department organizational and management structure tended toward a "silo" model, where each core function operated with autonomy and with little inter-departmental planning and coordination.

The Executive Team launched a strategic planning process as an important mechanism for ensuring everyone is working together with shared values and toward the same desired outcomes.

Therefore, the Executive Team embarked on a number of change management initiatives, including the preparation of a Strategic Plan.

- **Part I – Strategic Plan** (this document) was completed October 1, 2012, and outlines the Office's vision, mission, values, and goals for the next two years. It was developed through extensive participation and input from the Assessor Office's new leadership, managers, and employees.
- **Part II – Action Plans** were completed between October 2012 and January 2013 and involved 8 Action Planning Teams, representing a cross-section of the Office.

The Appendix provides background information on the County's Strategic Plan and outlines the kinds of strategic-planning initiatives that occurred within the Office of the Assessor during the first 100 days.

This Strategic Plan is viewed as *a living, breathing document* that will be refined as the Office implements it.

Strategic Plan Guiding Framework

The successful implementation of our Strategic Plan will require every employee to understand and focus on achieving our organization's motto, vision, mission, and values.

Our Motto

Valuing People and Property

Our Vision

To be the premier property assessment agency in the nation.

Our Mission

We value people and property by creating an accurate and timely assessment roll while delivering exceptional and professional public service with integrity.

Our Values

Our Strategic Plan defines what we will do. Our values define how we will act in achieving them. We will act consistent with our values and uphold the highest ethical standards.

We ASPIRE to be the best – the premier property assessment agency in the nation.

We support all of the County values and emphasize the importance of specific County values: Accountability, Professionalism, Integrity, and Respect. Given the nature of the Office of the Assessor, we have added Service Excellence and Equity.

Accountability

Service Excellence

Professionalism

Integrity

Respect

Equity

On the following page are explanations that define what we mean by each of Our Values.

A*ccountability*

We value the importance of being accountable for what we do.

- ✓ **Responsibility.** We accept full responsibility for the decisions we make and the actions we take.
- ✓ **Transparency and Honesty.** We believe in open, honest communications and operations.
- ✓ **Standards.** We uphold County and departmental policies and legal requirements through the use of standards, rules, and checks and balances.

S*ervice Excellence*

We value the public we serve. We will *respect* the public by *responding* to their needs to *resolve* their issues.

- ✓ **Respond.** We will listen attentively, assess their needs, and define the issue or problem.
- ✓ **Respect.** We will talk their language (literally and figuratively), be courteous, and value people.
- ✓ **Resolve.** We will be timely and efficient, educating the public or making referrals as necessary.

P*rofessionalism*

Our people are our most important assets.

- ✓ **Public Service.** We will instill in each employee a sense of accountability toward each other and the public they serve.
- ✓ **Pride.** We will take pride in our work and accomplishments.
- ✓ **Empowerment.** We will build an environment that fosters empowerment, advancement, trust, and loyalty.
- ✓ **Development.** We will invest in our development and well-being through education and by providing training, tools, and resources.

I*ntegrity*

We value the public's trust and, thus, ensure integrity in all that we do. We will do what's right, legally and morally. We will do and say nothing that deceives others to earn their trust in us.

- ✓ **Consistency.** We speak and act consistent with our values and in our work performed.
- ✓ **Courage to Stand for What is Right.** We will have zero tolerance of fraudulent acts.
- ✓ **Ethical.** We will have the courage to uphold the highest ethical standards in serving our customers and working with each other.
- ✓ **Internal Controls.** We will maintain internal controls, including regular auditing and risk management reviews.

R*espect*

- ✓ **Mutual Respect and Civility.** We respect our customers' needs by providing quality public service. In return, we expect to be treated with similar civility.

- ✓ **Public Trust.** We value the public's trust and, thus, will do and say nothing that deceives others.

E*quity*

- ✓ **Objectivity.** It is the Office of the Assessor's legal and ethical duty to deliver an impartial assessment roll in accordance with the law.

The Public We Serve

The public benefits from the Assessor's mission and requires the Office to be aware of the needs of various stakeholders and service beneficiaries. We know that our preparation of the assessment roll enables other County departments to perform their duties and collect taxes that fund our cities, schools, and local government agencies so they may provide essential amenities to the communities we serve. The role of the Office of the Assessor as a part of the "County family" has been further emphasized.

Ultimate and Indirect Beneficiaries

- LA County residents, businesses, and visitors who use or benefit from public services
- LA County cities, school districts, special assessment districts, and other County departments

Direct Customer Services

- Taxpayers – individuals, businesses, etc.
- Advocacy groups – third-party advocates, hearings and appeals lawyers, anti-tax organizations, chambers of commerce, business groups, lobbyists, real estate developers, small business owners, employee unions, media, etc.



Collaborators

- County partners – Registrar-Recorder; Auditor-Controller; Treasurer and Tax Collector; and Executive Office, Assessment Appeals Board
- Assessor staff members
- Vendors and contractors who work with the Office of the Assessor

Accountability Points

- County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors
- Cities in the County of Los Angeles
- California State Board of Equalization (SBE)
- Federal agencies
- Hearings and appeals board – hearing officers, local auditors, commissions, etc.

Accomplishments to Date

In September 2012, the Office prepared a “First 100 Days’ Initiatives” memorandum for the Office of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) regarding the accomplishments to date, which are highlighted here.

Strategic Planning

The Office has initiated a strategic-planning process and has adopted a new department mission, vision, and values statement, contained in this document. The strategic-planning effort involved both senior management and a wide cross-section of other employees. All Assessor staff were also surveyed on strategic issues and provided input via emails, employee suggestions, and other avenues.

Forecasting

The Office of the Assessor successfully completed its primary function; the compilation of the Annual Assessment Roll. The 2012 Assessment Roll reflected a 2.24% increase in value; the \$1,130,560,769,770 gross total is \$24.8 billion greater than last year.

The Annual Report that explains the role of the department and its finding was made available to the public on the Internet during the first week of September 2012.

An improved model and process for forecasting the Annual Assessment Roll has been adopted, involving:

- The forecast will henceforward be the responsibility of the Executive Team. The Team will collectively reach a consensus on the assumptions that guide the development of the forecast; each assumption will include an executive summary of its relevance to the forecast.
- Additional outside resources will be included in the forecast analysis, including such subject matter experts as real estate market specialists and economists, and collaboration with the Chief Executive Office.
- The forecast will be presented as a range in the future, as opposed to a fixed percentage estimate, with detailed explanations of the assumptions and their applicability to the forecast.

Policy and Process Improvements

The Office of the Assessor identified the need for policy and process improvements. By September 21, 2012, the Office had finalized three policies:

1. **Policy and Operating Practice Manual #4080-01-5: Assessor's Representatives and testifying Appraisers at Assessment Appeals Board Proceedings.** The Policy #4080 change provides clarification for both Assessor Representatives and Appraisers during our interactions at the Assessment Appeals Board, including testifying.
2. **Policy and Operating Practice Manual #5210-03-2: Accepting Sale Price in Transfer Reappraisal (State Board of Equalization (SBE) Rule 2).** We have amended Policy #5210-03-2 to clarify our process which will now require documentation if there is substantial and convincing evidence that the price is not an indication of market value.
3. **Policy and Operating Practice Manual #1500-04-01: Change in Ownership Reappraisal – District Guidelines.** This new policy provides guidelines for managing the Paperless Transfer System work flow in district offices and transfer delay time exceptions.

4. **New guidelines for Assessment Appeals, articulated in Special Value Change Approval, Policy No. 1502-1-8 (Policy and Operating Practice Manual).** The Office has established new guidelines for large assessment roll decreases, mandating high-level review and approval.

Audits

The Department has moved expeditiously to address the issues raised in previous audits, including the IT Audit released in April 2012. The recommendations of the April IT Audit have all been implemented. All surplus equipment has been distributed and in the future, the Department will only purchase equipment on an as needed basis.

The Executive Team is reviewing the findings and recommendations in the Auditor/Controller's comprehensive management audit, released in January 2013, and plans on implementing the outlined changes in a timely manner.

IT Initiatives

The Office has initiated a 3-5 year strategic plan for information technology (IT) through its IT Division (ITD).

The IT team is researching software systems and identifying existing issues, based on manager and staff feedback that will enhance efficiency, accountability, and greater accessibility. Some recent IT initiatives implemented involve:

- A rewrite of the Property Activity Information System public website was developed and is currently in final acceptance testing.
- ITD developed a new application, which produces letters for new Assessment Appeals Cases, requesting essential information to process applications.
- Internal Services Department (ISD) developed a new web application for submitting Assessor employee suggestions. ITD prepared responses to 22 Employee Suggestions recommended through the Employee Suggestion Box.

A draft proposal for a new prioritization process for all ITD projects was completed. The Project Portfolio Management software that is being developed will incorporate these procedures.

Training

The Office has dedicated substantial new resources for supervisory, leadership, professional development, and other types of training. The Department's training budget has been increased exponentially through the CEO. Additionally, \$22,500 was provided by SEIU Local 721 for training for personnel represented by this bargaining unit.

The Office historically has not provided adequate management, supervisory, and other personnel training. Additional broad-based training for planning, management and leadership skills, and career development is needed. Department managers have been directed to identify savings that can be shifted to augment the Department's training budget. A leadership training session for the Department's senior management was led by a leadership training expert who has successfully worked with County departments in the past. Efforts are being implemented to train executives in succession planning.

Communications

Keeping employees informed and engaged in a dialogue about the Office has been a high priority. Employees have been encouraged to contact the Chief Deputy Assessor directly via email; he answers all of their messages personally. New communications tool have been implemented, and existing communications vehicles have been greatly enhanced, including Weekly All Staff Messages, an Employee Intranet Suggestion Box, an Employee Newsletter, and “Leadership by Wandering Around” with regular staff meetings at work sites.

“Branding” Strategy

In addition, as a strategy to build employee morale and pride, we are developing a “branding” strategy for the Office, featuring the new motto of “Valuing People and Property.” We now have a Department-themed desktop background for all computers, which highlights the new motto and logo, as well as, photos or images that represent Office or County events. A new Department policy that provides for a uniform e-mail signature of all personnel in our Outlook email has been implemented.

Public Records Requests

Working with County Counsel, we have established a more efficient and appropriate process for managing the voluminous public records requests made by the media, District Attorney, and members of the public relative to the recent controversy.

Organization Development and Structure

A number of changes have been made organizationally, including:

- A new organization structure for the leadership of the Office
- The requirement of Mid-Year Work-plans for senior managers to improve budget estimates and the forecast and facilitate the development of goals and planning strategies necessary to better enhance efficiencies.
- 4/40 schedule modification
- Supplement funding for six new positions for the Quality Assurance Unit, approved by the CEO
- Personnel changes to stabilize the Office, involving placing a number of senior managers on administrative leave
- The launch of a review of practices related to promotions and job assignments, including consideration of annual personnel rotation, which is necessary to cross-train personnel on the various operations of the Office
- Assignment of new Assessor Representatives to represent the Office in appeals cases before the Assessment Appeals Board

Other Policy Changes

The Office has also initiated the following policy changes:

- **Automated Information Request.** In July 2012, the Department unveiled the Automated Information Request (AIR), a new program that notifies taxpayer electronically when their appeal is calendared with the Assessment Appeals Board. This automated system will enable Assessor personnel to request documentation in advance of the hearing, providing adequate

time to assess the merits of the appealed valuation, and avoid the need to engage in the negotiations in the Hall of Administration's cafeteria, a previously common practice.

- **Expanded Multiple Listing Service Access.** The Office of the Assessor purchased 60 additional licenses of the Multiple Listing Service (MLS), a tool vital to the work of appraisers, for our West District Office. This greater access to the MLS will increase the accuracy of appraisals, reduce the number of assessment appeals cases in the future, and boost employee morale.

Strategic Focus Areas and Action Planning

Building on the “First 100 Days’ Initiatives”, the Executive Team identified Strategic Focus Areas for the next one to three years. The Executive Team formed Action Planning Teams (APTs) to develop Action Plans to achieve goals for each Strategic Focus Area. The following table displays the Strategic Focus Areas; the Action Plans developed to address each, and proposed timelines to complete each Action Plan.

Action Plan	2013				2014				2015			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
STRATEGIC FOCUS I: NURTURING AN ETHICAL CULTURE												
I.1: Code of Conduct												
I.2: Enforcement and Protection of Employees and the Public												
I.3: Training and Development on Ethics												
I.4: Restoring Public Trust												
I.5: Gift and Gratuity Policy												
STRATEGIC FOCUS II: FISCAL FORECASTING MODEL												
II.1: Developing a Fiscal Forecasting Model												
STRATEGIC FOCUS III: POSITIVE CULTURE TRANSFORMATION												
III.1: Improve, Formalize, and Standardize Internal Communication and Customer Service												
III.2: Develop and Formalize a Comprehensive Staff Development												
III.3: Develop and Formalize an Office Morale Program												
STRATEGIC FOCUS IV: HUMAN CAPITAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL												
IV.1: Recruiting and Developing Individuals with Ethical Orientations												
IV.2: Professional Development and Succession Planning												
IV.3: Chain of Command and Delegation of Authority												
STRATEGIC FOCUS V: TECHNOLOGY AND IT												
V.1: Business Solutions Process and Structure												
V.2: Short-Term Business Solutions												
V.3: Medium-Term Business Solutions												
V.4: Transformational Business Solutions												
STRATEGIC FOCUS VI: PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND COMMUNICATION												
VI.1: Create a professional Public Affairs & Communications Team (PACT)												
VI.2: Support the implementation of the Strategic Plan and respond specifically to other APT’s outlined initiatives for the PACT												
VI.3: Develop specific Action Plan initiatives for how the PACT can best serve the Office of the Assessor in the next two years												
STRATEGIC FOCUS VII: POLICIES AND PROCESSES												
VII.1: Use Procedural Revisions to Encourage Positive Change												
STRATEGIC FOCUS VIII: METRICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY												
VIII.1: Metrics Dashboard												
VIII.2: Data Maintenance												

Appendix: Strategic Planning Background

In 1999, the County of Los Angeles adopted a Strategic Plan and has modified and updated that plan several times in the intervening decade. The County's Strategic Plan includes a Mission Statement, Goals, Strategies, and Objectives. The County requires each department to develop a Strategic Plan and outcomes measurement system consistent with the County-wide initiatives.

Relationship to County Strategic Plan

The County's Strategic Plan has served as a guide for the development of the Office of the Assessor Strategic Plan 2012-2014. The County's revised Strategic Plan Goals, adopted by the Board of Supervisors in April 2012, include:

Countywide Goals

1. **Operational Effectiveness:** Maximize the effectiveness of process, structure, and operations to support timely delivery of customer-oriented and efficient public service.

Programmatic Goals

2. **Fiscal Responsibility:** Strengthen and enhance the County's capacity to sustain essential County services through proactive and prudent fiscal policies and stewardship.
3. **Integrated Services Delivery:** Maximize opportunities to measurably improve client and community outcomes and leverage resources through the continuous integration of health, community, and public safety services.

Strategic Planning Process

The Office of the Assessor conducted a competitive bid and retained KH Consulting Group (KH) of Los Angeles to assist with the strategic-planning effort. A multi-prong effort was embarked on to develop this Strategic Plan expeditiously with widespread input:

- During July and September, hundreds of employees in the Office of the Assessor provided input on vision, mission, and values to the Chief Deputy Assessor.
- KH interviewed more than 35 managers to solicit their input on the desired vision, mission, values, and strategic directions.
- On August 15, 2012, 50 Assessor management and staff met to discuss the Office's **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)**; mission, vision, and values; and strategic priorities. KH facilitated the all-day Strategic Planning Session. The Session provided the opportunity for the participants to communicate openly across Division and unit lines and begin to shape a strategic direction.
- A follow-up half-day meeting was held to refine further the mission and values in September 2012. In addition, the Office surveyed all employees regarding mission statement options.
- The Executive Team formed 8 Action Planning Teams (APTs), which KH facilitated, to develop Action Plans for each Strategic Focus Area. The APTs presented their Action Plans to the Executive Team during two half-day sessions in January 2013.

KH held several review meetings with the Executive Team to finalize the Strategic Plan and Action Plans

County of Los Angeles Office of the Assessor



*Valuing People
and Property*

Strategic Plan 2013-2015

Part II. Action Plans



Strategic Focus: Nurturing an Ethical Culture

Overview

For most of its 162-year history, the Office of the Assessor has remained a quiet and often overlooked government agency. While being headed by an elected official, the Assessor and the Office are largely unknown and little understood compared to most other elective offices in the County. Despite its obscurity, however, the Office has not been without controversy.

In the late 1970s, the Board of Supervisors alleged that the then-Assessor Philip E. Watson (1963-1977) applied unfair assessment policies, favoring big corporations at the expense of small homeowners. More than 30 years later, the Office is again the subject of close public scrutiny following the allegations of wrong-doing by current and former employees.

As a result of recent events:

- The Office has been subject to a series of investigations, audits, media coverage, and public scrutiny.
- The Office has been caught-up in a culture of blame versus a culture of solutions.
- Many Assessor employees feel undermined and betrayed by both allegations and those accused. This feeling is particularly strong, given that the overwhelming majority of employees view themselves as conscientious and ethical in the performance of their duties.
- The Office has lost the trust of the public.

Whether the allegations of wrong-doing are proven or not, the overwhelming majority of Assessor employees are ethical, but feel tarnished by the investigation and allegations against allegedly “rogue” employees. As a result, employees want to prevent such unethical activity from ever happening again – whether real or perceived – and have expressed a desire to create a culture of “no tolerance” toward unethical behavior.

Charter and Focus

The charter of the Action Planning Team on ethics (APT-Ethics) is to identify actions that can be taken to avoid and mitigate potential fraudulent acts and behavior in the future. Paramount to this effort is the transforming of the Office's internal culture and restoring the public's trust in our work.

Fundamental to the success of this Action Plan (and subsequent Action Plans) is that management must take responsibility for the restoration of trust with our employees and the public. They serve as role models and must lead the organization in emphasizing the importance of establishing an ethical work culture. Without them as role models, it is hard for any values or the Code of Conduct to be credible among the workforce.

Participants on the APT-Ethics included all Division Chiefs in the Office. They collectively recognize the importance of their roles in serving as a "firewall" between their employees and other influences – whether internal or external political pressures.

Finally, it is important that the taxpayers and their representatives also follow the rules and emulate mutual respect with the Office. It takes two to enter into illegal or unethical practices. Taxpayers and their representatives must adhere to the same ethical standards that we do.

Values-Based Action Plans and Code of Conduct

These Action Plans build on the Office's Values of **"We A.S.P.I.R.E. to be the best"**:

- **A**ccountability
- **S**ervice Excellence
- **P**rofessionalism
- **I**ntegrity
- **R**espect
- **E**quity

The APT-Ethics developed five Action Plans that in combination reinforce the kind of work environment that the Office wants to build and sustain:

- Action Plan I.1: Code of Conduct
- Action Plan I.2: Enforcement and Protection of Employees and the Public
- Action Plan I.3: Training and Development on Ethics
- Action Plan I.4: Restoring Public Trust
- Action Plan I.5: Gift and Gratuity Policy

The APT-Ethics prepared two deliverables as part of their planning activities for review by Executive leadership; these deliverables are attached at the end of these Action Plans:

Strategic Plan 2013-2015

- Attachment A – contains a Code of Conduct for the Office of the Assessor
- Attachment B – elaborates on these values from an ethics perspective.

Creating an ethical work culture is part-and-parcel to work cultural change, internal communications, human capital, and organizational development (OD), which are addressed in other Action Plans:

- Action Plans III: Positive Culture Transformation
- Action Plan IV.1: Recruiting and Developing Individuals with Ethical Orientations
- Action Plan IV.3: Chain of Command and Delegation of Authority

Action Plans

Action Plan I.1: Code of Conduct

Background

The recent events surrounding the Office have emphasized the need for a thorough self-examination and the establishment of the principles for which we stand. There is no place more important where the mantle of such evaluation rests than with those who manage and direct the staff.

The overwhelming majority of Assessor employees uphold the standards of integrity, accountability, and public service. In light of the incidents leading to a loss of public trust in the Assessor's Office, it is critical that the Office establish and communicate a Code of Conduct that formally outlines expected ethical actions – starting with Office leadership and then filtering throughout the ranks.

Strategies

Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is critical for a productive and successful operation and for serving the greater needs of Los Angeles County. Because the public trust and the trust and respect of employees has been compromised at the highest level, repair must begin there. Starting with the top executive level, every manager and supervisor must lead in an ethical manner and reinforce the Office's A.S.P.I.R.E. Values.

Acknowledgement and Reconciliation

An honest commitment to restore the integrity of the Executive Office is a necessary first step in rebuilding the work culture and regaining the public trust. Therefore, it is important to communicate to our employees and the public that:

- We are committed to ethical and legal behaviors
- Our rank-and-file employees are not responsible for what happened

Such communication will go a long way in healing the organization.

We have to move on... acknowledge and reconcile the wrong-doings of the past with a steadfast commitment to ethical practices going forward. We also know maintaining a positive attitude will be challenging, given the ongoing audits, investigations, and media coverage.

Formal Definition of the Office's Values and Code of Conduct

Managers must establish, communicate, and educate our employees regarding the doctrines – stated as *Values* and the *Codes of Conduct* – regarding what our actions should be. Furthermore, we strive to create an environment where these doctrines flourish.

One of the first action steps that the APT took was to develop a Code of Conduct for review, refinement, and Executive approval. The Code of Conduct drafted builds on the Office's Values of **"We A.S.P.I.R.E. to be the best."** A separate document outlines the ethical implications of our values.

Simply issuing a Code of Conduct would not suffice and might in fact have a backlash, creating negative morale since most Assessor employees believe they are and always have been ethical in their actions. Therefore, the subsequent Action Steps to review, discuss, and "own" the Code of Conduct throughout the Office is important.

Expected Outcomes/Benefits

- Re-enforce our Values
- Instill ethical leadership in decision-making at every level of the organization
- Nurture an environment where employees think about what they do, what is legal, and what is ethical
- Restore the respect and trust of the employees for management by acknowledging the wrongdoing and accepting responsibility at the highest levels
- Increase employee morale by not tolerating intimidation and retaliation
- Restore pride in working for the Office of the Assessor
- Establish a more equitable and "fact-based" valuations strategy
- Build the desired work culture and environment that:
 - Ensures that lines of communication and transparency exist between managers and employees
 - Promotes collaboration and cooperation among all Assessor divisions
 - Rewards good behavior (refer to Action Plan IV.1 on Recruiting and Developing Individuals with Ethical Orientations)
 - Empowers employees and delegates decision-making as appropriate (refer to Action Plan IV.3 on "Chain of Command and Delegation of Authority")

Goal I.1: Nurture and Sustain an Ethical Work Culture Through our Values and Code of Conduct

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
CODE OF CONDUCT (See Draft in Appendix A)			
A. Acknowledge that the managerial behavior emanating from the Executive Office in the past, whether found to be unlawful or not, was inappropriate and that the Executives understand that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Employees feel they were betrayed at the highest-level of the organization b. Employees felt subject to unacceptable pressures in the past 	Executive Team	Division Chiefs	February 2013
B. Draft a Code of Conduct for all employees consistent with the Office's Values and objectives (See Draft in Appendix A)	APT-Ethics		Drafted January 2013 (Completed)
C. Review the draft Code of Conduct with the Executive Team; refine the draft Code of Ethics based on the Executive Team feedback	APT-Ethics	Executive Team	January 2013
D. Have the Division Chiefs acknowledge their commitment to the Code of Conduct	Acting Department Head; Executive Team		Completed; January 2013
E. Have the Executive team acknowledge their commitment to the Code of Conduct	Executive Team		February 2013
F. Inform unions about the Code of Conduct process and draft Code of Conduct	Administrative Deputy		February 2013
G. Have each Division Chief share and discuss the Values and Code of Conduct in small group forums with their own staff; solicit feedback (Note: It is important that employees are part of the review of the Code of Conduct so they feel ownership of it.)	Division Chiefs; APT-Ethics		February through March 2013
H. Refine the draft Code of Conduct, based on employee feedback: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Share the feedback with the other Division Chiefs – all of whom are on the APT-Ethics b. Refine or expand on the draft Code of Conduct further if needed c. Seek Executive Team approval of the revised Code of Conduct 	APT-Ethics	Executive Team	March and April 2013

Goal I.1: Nurture and Sustain an Ethical Work Culture Through our Values and Code of Conduct

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
I. Have the Executive Team reinforce the Values and Code of Conduct during: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ “Town hall-style” meetings with employees ■ Small group discussions ■ Official directive 	Executive Team	Division Chiefs/ APT-Ethics	April 2013; ongoing
ONGOING REINFORCEMENT OF THE VALUES AND CODE OF CONDUCT			
J. Develop a “Pledge to adhere to the Values and Code of Conduct,” starting with the Executive team and involving all employees; discuss and acknowledge the Pledge, indicating continued commitment to ethical behavior and decision-making	Executive Team	All Assessor employees	April 2013; annual thereafter – logically every January
K. Design and implement a regular ethics training program			See Ethics Action Plan I.3
CODE OF CONDUCT FOR TAX AGENTS			
L. Establish a Tax Agent Registration Program (Note: The Board of Supervisor has already spearheaded this initiative.— Refer to Objective 1.2.5 regarding enforcement for more details on this Action)	Board of Supervisors	Executive Team	In progress, estimated completion is April 2013

Action Plan I.2: Enforcement and Protection of Employees and the Public

Background

The Office has come under scrutiny regarding alleged favors rendered in exchange for lowered assessments and inconsistent application and enforcement of existing rules, policies, and procedures. We must conduct our business to the highest standards of professionalism and integrity. Moreover, we must always be knowledgeable of, and adhere to, current Assessor policies and administrative, financial, personnel, ethical and legal requirements and regulations.

Strategies

We need to employ compliance checks and balances among our managers, employees, and the public and provide them with avenues to voice their concerns. This will ensure the protection of our employees, all of the Assessor's stakeholders, and the public at large.

Protecting Our Stakeholders and Avoiding Conflicts of Interest

Action Plan I.5 outlines a new gift and gratuity policy to assist employees in avoiding any actual or perceived conflicts that can involve bribes – financial offerings, professional opportunities, or other benefits – from third parties for either us or a friend or family member.

Protecting Our Employees with a Staff Advocate

We should establish conduits for employees to report or identify work situations that will not result in retaliation, such as the Staff Advocate position, discussed in greater detail in Action Plan III.1 under "Positive Culture".

Ethics Officer and Ethics Review Board

We need to establish the position mechanisms to convene an Ethics Review Board as needed and potentially establish an Ethics Officer position. The Ethics Officer serves as the organization's internal control point for ethics, and improprieties, allegations, complaints and conflicts of interest. The Ethics Officer is the guardian of the organization's ethical policies. The key duties and responsibilities of the Ethics Officer would include:

- Provide employees and stakeholders with a venue to ask any questions of an ethical nature that cannot be readily addressed within their work group or their chain-of-command
- Create an atmosphere where employees can report confidentially or anonymously any real or perceived misconduct without fear of retaliation
- Design, manage, and implement all training in ethics and compliance issues and ethical decision-making throughout the organization
- Investigate ethical complaints or violations and enforce corrective measures where needed (recommended actions may consist of disciplinary methods, recommendations, or counseling)

- Implement ethical components reflecting the organization's ethical policies in other areas such as employee recruitment and selection, annual evaluations, and operational policies and procedures
- Review the Office's Code of Conduct, Gift and Gratuities Policy, and related policies biennially and ensure full compliance of employees with requirements to file financial disclosure statements (Form 700) and any other similar public filing required by law

The Ethics Review Board will be comprised of both internal and external members that will review questionable practices or cases and enforce ethical policies. The Ethics Officer will determine when it is necessary to use the Ethics Review Board.

The graphic highlights the differences in the roles and responsibilities of Staff Advocate and Ethics Officer positions.

Differences in Roles and Responsibilities



Enforcement

Enforcement of the Code of Conduct is comprised of two parts:

1. The responsibility of the employees in reporting Code of Conduct violations, keeping in mind these key criteria:
 - **Act:** Was an act of fraud, lying, cheating, or stealing committed?
 - **Knowledge:** Did the employee know, or should have reasonably known, that the act in question was fraud, lying, cheating, or stealing?
 - **Significance:** Would open toleration of this act violate or erode employee and/or the public trust?
2. The adjudication of claims of conduct violations

Such enforcement is predicated on:

1. All employees have an affirmative duty to report instances of Code of Conduct violations including, but not limited to, undo pressure directed at themselves or their fellow employees.
2. Managers are expected to escalate claims of conduct violation promptly through the established enforcement process and not simply resolve claims internally.
3. All employees are expected to abide by the decision of the Ethics Review Board.

Executive Referrals

As discussed in the IT Action Plan IV.5, the Executive Office receives inquiries from a myriad of sources, such as the Board of Supervisors (BOS), County inter-departmental case referrals (e.g., TTC, Auditor-Controller, etc.), inter-governmental case referrals (BOE, Cities, State, and Federal agencies), and taxpayer /tax agents. We need to review and improve our process for handling Executive Referrals – (formerly known as “10-Day Pink Specials”), and other outside requests.

Expected Outcomes/Benefits

Other benefits include:

- Increase employee morale by discouraging intimidation and retaliation
- Availability of Staff Advocate (Action Plan III) and an Ethics Officer (this Action Plan) to protect employees who need to report misdeeds or policy violations
- Checks and balances to minimize the risk of unethical practices
- Enforcement of the Code of Conduct
- Better procedural and operational compliance with a Quality Assurance/Internal Audit unit
- Better tracking, coordination, and follow-up on Executive Referrals (discussed in IT Action Plan IV.5)

Goal I.2: Exercise Enforcement of Ethical Decision-making and Actions with Adequate Employee Protection Measures

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
PROTECTING OUR EMPLOYEES			

Objective I.2.1: See Action Plan III – Positive Culture Transformation, Objective 1.5: By Q4 2014, Formalize the Office Staff Advocate Position

Objective I.2.2: By September 2013, establish an Ethics Officer and an Ethics Review Board

A. Explore the benefits of an Ethics Officer position within the Office of the Assessor	Executive Team		July 2013
B. Establish an Ethics Review Board <u>as needed</u> (with both internal and external members) that will review questionable practices or cases and enforce ethical practices; we propose that the Ethics Review Board use the criteria – the act, knowledge, and significance – to determine whether or not an ethical offense has occurred	Administrative Deputy, or if available, Ethics Officer		December 2013
C. Communicate throughout the organization the role of the Ethics Review Board and, if hired, an Ethics Officer (e.g., ethics training, ethics hotline, Gift Policy, Form 700, etc.)	Public Affairs & Communications Team (PACT)	Ethics Officer	December 2013
D. Establish an Ethics Hotline within the Office or promote the County's Fraud Hotline(s)	Administrative Deputy, or if available, Ethics Officer		August 2013
E. Provide feedback on outcomes of the Ethics Review Board decisions to involved parties, including individuals in the chain of command	Administrative Deputy, or if available, Ethics Officer		August; thereafter ongoing

Objective I.2.3: By September 2013, establish a Quality Assurance/Internal Audit unit

A. Establish a Quality Assurance/Internal Audit unit that conducts management risk assessments and compliance audits of policies and procedures; establish consistency in forms and procedures across the Office	Assistant Assessor		In Progress
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ENFORCEMENT OF CODE OF CONDUCT FOR TAXPAYERS AND THIRD-PARTY AGENTS ACTING ON BEHALF OF TAXPAYERS

Goal I.2: Exercise Enforcement of Ethical Decision-making and Actions with Adequate Employee Protection Measures

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
<i>Objective I.2.4: By June 2014, establish an enforcement code and process for taxpayers and third-party agents who attempt to influence the development, result, or review of an appraisal, exemption, ownership investigation or other assessment issue through coercion, bribery, extortion, or intimidation.</i>			
A. Support the Office of the CEO and BOS in establishing a Tax Agent Registration Program (Note: The BOS has already spearheaded this initiative.— Refer to Action Plan 1.1 regarding a “Code of Conduct” for Tax Agents)	Board of Supervisors; Office of CEO	Executive Team	In Progress To be completed by March 2013
B. Review the BOS’s Tax Agent Registration Program and establish internal processes for reporting any violators	APT-Ethics		September 2013

MANAGING REFERRALS AND CASES FOR APPRAISAL REVIEWS –

Objective I.2.5: See IT Action Plan V.5: Managing Referrals and Cases for Appraisal Reviews

Action Plan I.3: Training and Development on Ethics

Background

In recent years, the Office has invested little in training and development beyond the technical skills for appraisers.

- Management and supervisors lack training in dealing with situations in the workplace and effectively addressing employees concerns.
- Little attention is given to developing emotional intelligence and communication skills to help lead at the interpersonal level and deal with conflicts.
- Even less attention is paid to training in developing and implementing strategy at the organizational level.
- The Office should enhance its “fact-based” valuations strategy so discretionary factors are minimal.
- Finally, **“We A.S.P.I.R.E. to be the best”** but, to be the best, we have to re-build and sustain an Office that is known for its technical appraisal skills, as well as one that is ethical, socially responsible, and culturally aware. We must “walk the talk” and emulate our Values A.S.P.I.R.E.

Strategies

We recognize that ethical behavior has to start at the top but must occur at every level of the Office. Most learn ethical leadership through active leading. That said, formal training in leadership, combined with active feedback from peers and managers, can help further reinforce ethical leadership and ethics in the workplace. Moreover, we must develop and educate our employees about available checks and balances to:

- Uphold and comply with our policies, regulations, and rules that govern our operations and conduct
- Engage in responsible decision-making when regulations or policies may be unclear
- Seek additional advice when needed from our supervisors or division managers, County Counsel, the Department of Human Resources (DHR), or any other appropriate authorities
- Establish and use internal mechanisms, such as a Staff Advocate, internal audit group, or an internal Ethics Review Board that can intervene and assist as necessary without retaliation, as discussed in Action Plan I.2
- Avoid using resources not available to the general public for our private gain, such as staff time, property, equipment, information or data, or electronic assets (discussed in Action Plan 1.5)
- Disclose any professional or financial interests that could result in real or perceived conflicts of interests in compliance with existing financial disclosure laws

Expected Outcomes/Benefits

- Emphasizing the importance of ethics in the workplace, combined with ethical leadership and ethical decision-making
- Establish a more equitable and “fact-based” valuations strategy

Goal I.3: Establish a regular training program on ethics, involving review of legal requirements, responsibilities, and expectations

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
A. Develop a training plan, coupled with an internal communications plan, for a formal and regular training program on ethics	Administrative Deputy, or if available, Ethics Officer	Human Resources/ Training	To begin once the Ethics Officer incumbent is in place
B. Establish discussion groups or forums across organizational lines where employees can meet to discuss ethical challenges in the workplace	Administrative Deputy, or if available, Ethics Officer	Human Resources/ Training; Division Chiefs	First 6 months
C. Develop monthly activities centered around the Office’s Values and Code of Conduct, involving case study discussions and other exercises; form discussion groups or forums to tackle and share feedback on real situations	Administrative Deputy, or if available, Ethics Officer	Human Resources/ Training; Division Chiefs	Monthly thereafter

Action Plan I.4: Restoring Public Trust

Background

Public trust is our most significant responsibility. We must uphold the principles of open government, including independence, objectivity, and transparency (within the constraints of taxpayer confidentiality) in our decision-making and public disclosure.

We understand that we are part of a larger community that benefits from our work. We uphold all laws and regulations and ensure equity in preparing the annual Assessment Roll. We also recognize that we represent the Office at all times and, thus, deceitful conduct by a single individual erodes the trust of the public in the entire Office.

We also have many different types of stakeholders. Our direct service beneficiaries are the taxpayers but we also must work directly with other County departments (e.g., Auditor-Controller, Registrar-Recorder, and TTC) and accountability points (e.g., Office of the CEO, BOS, BOE, and State legislature). Our work indirectly benefits other County departments, cities, school districts, and other governmental entities. We also must maintain the greater trust of the public – all those who live, work, and visit the County of Los Angeles.

Assessor's Stakeholder Segments



Strategies

We know we cannot restore public trust until we have demonstrated that we have earned the public's right to believe in us again. Our commitment to our Values and our reinforcement of our Code of Conduct are important starting points but it is our day-to-day actions and services that will best demonstrate who we are. Our strategy involves each of us restoring the public trust.

Expected Outcomes/Benefits

- Restored public trust through fair and equitable assessments
- Great public service, which includes, but is not limited to, honesty with taxpayers when it comes to their assessments
- Better morale because services provided are appreciated

Assessor Service Commitment:

We will provide outstanding public service every day, one taxpayer at a time, by being fair, professional, and timely

Goal I.4: Restore the Public Trust

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
A. Develop a public outreach program to communicate corrective actions taken within the Office; initially focus on content of "100-Day Report" (Refer to the PACT Action Plan VI for further elaboration)	Public Affairs & Communications Team (PACT)/ Outreach		See PACT Action Plan VI
B. Form a Customer Experience Task Force, including staff from District Offices and chaired by the Director, Assessor Operations	Executive Team	Director, Assessor Operations – Roll Services	July 2013
C. Analyze and improve the customer experience – top-to-bottom, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Point of initial contact with the Office until final resolution of problem (e.g., way-finding to District Offices, District Offices, Hall of Administration, parking, on phone, by mail, websites, etc.) b. Develop implementable solutions to make the customer experience more positive c. Identify ideas for staffing and refreshing the main counter 	Director, Assessor Operations – Roll Services	Customer Experience Task Force	December 2013

Goal I.4: Restore the Public Trust

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
<p>D. Update the voice message recordings (script) with increased uniformity, based on “customer experiences” for the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Office’s main phone system b. Call Center c. Individual District Office phone systems 	Assistant Assessor – Operations	Customer Experience Task Force	March 2013
<p>E. Improve/replace the phone system with a more user friendly customer service interface; upgrade:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Office’s main phone system b. Office’s backup telephone in the Telephone Unit: AASTRA M5216 (originally requested on January 4, 2012) c. Call Center d. Individual District Office phone systems e. Back-up phone for the main telephone unit f. County 800 line g. Other Divisions, including Ownership, Exemptions, Personal Property, and Major Property 	Assistant Assessor – Operations	ISD, ITD, Tax Collector, Registrar-Recorder, Auditor-Controller, Assessment Appeals Board	TBD
<p>F. Modernize the Website for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Office of the Assessor b. Property Tax Portal 	(Refer to IT Action Plan V.2 for details)		See IT Action Plan V.2
<p>G. Review all Assessor forms required for the public to complete and streamline them, ensuring they have a common look and are user friendly</p>	Assistant Assessor	Standards	Ongoing
<p>H. Promote the public’s recourse through the Assessment Appeals Board when the Office’s decisions are challenged (refer to Action Plan 1.2 on “Enforcement and Protection of the Public”)</p>	See later Action Steps		See Ethics Action Plan 1.2

Goal I.4: Restore the Public Trust

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
I. Provide training and “talking points” for employees, particularly those who must interface with the public, that challenges the credibility of the Office (e.g., public counters, property tax seminars)	Special Assistant	Division Chiefs	March 2013
J. Remove the “mystery” around work performed at the Office, including facts and figures	PACT, Special Assistant	PACT, Outreach Team	See PACT Action Plan VI; Ongoing
K. Develop a communication plan that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identifies the audiences/stakeholders b. Identifies the types of messages these audiences/stakeholders should receive, as well as the most effective channels of communications for the messages c. Outlines a crisis communication plan to outline how to respond to controversies or media-related investigations d. Develops strategies for informing the public of efforts being made to “turnaround” the Office and restore their confidence 	PACT		See PACT Action Plan VI

Action Plan I.5: Gift and Gratuity Policy

Background

The Office has many stakeholders; the taxpayer is a direct customer but the Office interfaces with other County departments (e.g., Registrar-Recorder, Auditor-Controller, Treasurer-Tax Collector, and the Office of the CEO), and the Board of Supervisors. In addition, the Office has many indirect beneficiaries of our work – school districts, cities, and other jurisdictions. And ultimately, the Office exists to serve the public at large. All of our stakeholders rely on our production of a fair and equitable tax roll.

A conflict of interest occurs when our personal interests take precedence over, or interfere with, our respective duties. This is contrary to the Office's Values and Code of Conduct. We need to ensure our decisions do not provide an unfair advantage to any individual taxpayer(s) or group of taxpayers.

Strategies

We realize that we cannot develop enough guidelines to cover all possible situations. Therefore, we must instill a basic philosophy that we are ethical in all that we do.

We want to ensure that all Assessor business practices are free and independent from any real or perceived improper influence. Therefore:

- We must avoid any relationship, activity, or influence that may impede our ability to be fair and independent.
- Employees should not give or receive gifts, meals, travel, honoraria, outside earned income, favors, or promises of future benefits that might compromise our independence.

We also understand that periodically a kind-hearted taxpayer may offer small gifts – baked cookies, flowers, or candy – as a means of showing appreciation for good public service. It is our responsibility to thank them for their considerations and explain why we cannot accept such gifts. In some circumstances, such gifts are delivered through private courier services with no easy means to return them. Therefore, we need to develop a policy to address such situations.

Expected Outcomes/Benefits

- Clarity in the Office's policy regarding gifts and gratuities
- Consistency in implementation of the Assessor's handling of gifts and gratuities

Action Plan I.5: Establish and implement a Gift and Gratuity Policy (see Attachment C)

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
A. Develop a formal Gift and Gratuity Policy (see Attachment C), focused on external relationships	Special Assistant		In Progress; March 2013
B. Review policy with County Counsel	Special Assistant	County Counsel	In Progress
C. Educate Assessor employees about the policy	Special Assistant	Special Assistant – Communications	March 2013 through May 2013; then ongoing
D. Educate the public about the policy, focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Persons doing business with the Office b. Taxpayer representatives seeking to influence the Office's decisions 	Special Assistants/ Public Affairs & Communications Team (PACT)		May through September 2013; then ongoing

Attachment A – Office of the Assessor: Code of Conduct

Recent events surrounding the Office of the Assessor have emphasized the need for thorough self-examination and the establishment of the principles for which we, as an Office, stand.

Management's Code of Conduct

There exists no place more important where the mantle of such evaluation rests than with those who manage and direct the staff.

As managers, we believe it is critical to establish and communicate to the employees of the Los Angeles County Assessor's Office those doctrines by which we agree to serve. Furthermore, we strive to create an environment where these doctrines flourish.

Independence, objectivity, and impartiality: We believe in the independence of our staff to conduct analysis and develop, based on the best information available, independent conclusions to assessment issues. To that end:

1. Managers will not influence the development, result, or review of an appraisal, exemption, ownership investigation, or other assessment issue through:
 - a. Coercion
 - b. Compensation
 - c. Bribery
 - d. Extortion
 - e. Intimidation
 - f. Job assignments or promotions
 - g. Performance Evaluations (PEs) and Appraisals for Promotability (APs)
2. Managers will not impose on any staff to perform their duty in a manner that violates law or regulation.
3. Managers will not engage in behavior that impairs or compromises their ability to execute the duties of their position with objectivity and impartiality of their staff members.
4. Managers are responsible to create an environment where these doctrines are pursued by their staff.
5. Managers will not engage in any form of retaliation when a claim of conduct violation is levied against the manager or their staff.

All Employees's Code of Conduct

These next Codes of Conduct apply to management and all employees alike:

1. Employees will not influence the development, result, or review of an appraisal, exemption, ownership investigation or other assessment issue through:
 - a. Coercion
 - b. Compensation
 - c. Bribery
 - d. Extortion
 - e. Intimidation
2. Employees are responsible for following the chain of command.
3. Employees will not engage in behavior that impairs or compromises their ability to execute the duties of their position with objectivity and impartiality.
4. Employees must avoid any personal situations or professional contacts that can be construed as a conflict of interest.
5. Employees must inform their superiors of any property where an assessment is mandated for which they have financial or familial interest.
6. Employees will not attempt to influence, in any way, any aspect of an appraisal of property for which they have financial or familial interest.

Code Enforcement

Enforcement of the Code of Conduct is comprised of two segments:

- The responsibility of the staff in reporting conduct violations
- The adjudication of claims of conduct violations

Enforcement of the Code of Conduct is predicated on the unwavering adherence to three doctrines:

1. All employees are responsible for reporting instances of Code of Conduct violations, including but not limited to undo pressure aimed at themselves or their fellow employees.
2. Managers are expected to promptly escalate claims of conduct violation through the enforcement process and not resolve claims internally.
3. All employees are expected to abide by the decision of the Ethics Review Board.

Third-Party Agents' and Taxpayers' Code of Conduct

Just as the Office of the Assessor abides by a Code of Conduct, we also expect taxpayers and third-parties acting as the agents for the taxpayers will also abide by certain ethical codes, namely, they will not attempt to influence the development, result, or review of an appraisal, exemption, ownership investigation, or other assessment issue through:

- a. Coercion
 - b. Bribery
 - c. Extortion
 - d. Intimidation
-

As senior management and Chief Appraisers/Division Chiefs, we developed and pledge to abide by this Code of Conduct.

Attachment B – Ethical Implications of Our Values

The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to promote and integrate a shared commitment to the Office's Values. The Code of Conduct is a guide to right actions for the employees based on our values (beliefs) and the ethical implications (behaviors) of those values. The Code is also a promise to the public that we will act with fairness, objectivity, and fidelity to the law. To regain the public's trust and maintain it, the Code of Conduct must apply to all of the following:

- The elected Assessor and his/her appointees
- All Executives, managers, supervisors, and employees of the Office
- The Board of Supervisors and their staff, as well as other County departments, which work with the Office
- All business and professional relationships among the Assessor's stakeholders, including taxpayers, taxpayer representatives, other cities and school districts, and the public at large

Organizational Values Underlie the Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct sets aspirations for anticipated behaviors, but underneath must be solid values. The Code of Conduct builds on the Office's Values. These values must be taken to heart by our staff as individuals and more importantly as professionals.

Our Values

In redefining ourselves, we selected particular values – professional values for a professional organization – which we believe describe us and which we want others to see in us. Our values are ideals we aspire to:

- **A**ccountability
- **S**ervice Excellence
- **P**rofessionalism
- **I**ntegrity
- **R**espect
- **E**quity

But...What are Values?

Values are our core beliefs.

Values are the embodiment of what an organization stands for and should be the basis for the behavior of its members.

Values are the foundation for everything we do and everything we want to do. Values underlie what decisions we make, whether we behave one way or another, good or bad, right or wrong, legal or illegal. Our values determine how we behave; they push us in one direction or another.

When values are shared by all members of an organization, they are important tools for making judgments, assessing probable outcomes of contemplated actions, and choosing among alternatives. Perhaps more importantly, they put all members "on the same page" with regard to what all members as a body consider important.

Values are what we as a profession judge to be right. They are more than words; they are our moral guide helping us determine what is right or wrong.

(Ethics concerns *doing* what is right, to behave ethically is to behave in a manner consistent with what is right or moral. Values are not character, but they are part of it. Character is a composite of good moral qualities typically of moral excellence and firmness, blended with resolution, self-discipline, and judgment.)

Values Are Not Relative

Right and wrong are not relative: we must make judgments. What is right for one party must be right for every other party and what is wrong for one party must be wrong for every other party. Right and wrong are not relative to a situation or a relationship or a location. Fairness and integrity are universals.

Everything we do demonstrates our values and promotes our values: When a supervisor treats his/her staff in a fair, professional manner he/she gains their respect and becomes a role model to be followed:

- When an employee makes a promise to a member of the public to correct a mistake and does so, that is demonstration that he/she is as good as his/her word and is accountable.
- Should a dispute need to be settled at a hearing and the Office's position follows the rules and is well argued and similar disputes are addressed similarly, the Office's authority and integrity are maintained and respected.

Values are nonnegotiable.

Implications of Values

Values have major influence on a person's behavior and attitude and serve as broad guidelines in all situations.

As public servants, we are morally bound, just as are other persons, to tell the truth, keep promises, respect the person and the property of others, and abide by the requirements of the law. But public officials have more power than the average member of society and, hence, more opportunity for violation of laws.

Procedural safeguards are designed to prevent that abuse. The moral obligation of public servants is to follow established procedures, and not to use their power to circumvent those procedures for their own convenience or benefit. Power must be used fairly and for the benefit of the public.

The Assessor's Office is a government agency whose duties are authorized by the Constitution, statutes (codes), the State Board of Equalization (SBE), and the courts.

The decisions we make must be in accordance with and consistent with the many statutes, codes, administrative rules, and court decisions that authorize and regulate this Office. In the event an employee, as a public officer, is faced with making a decision without explicit instruction from the law, the proper values (the values we espouse) would aid in directing the decision to an end consistent with the body of law and regulation we are subject to.

Organizational values are frameworks for the way we do things.

Values at work assist us by providing a framework for:

- How we treat one another at work
- How we treat our stakeholders
- Achieving the vision and increasing the effectiveness of the organization
- Creating an environment conducive to job satisfaction as well as finding work which is exciting and challenging

Values give us guidelines for our behavior:

- Values state to the public and potential staff that "This is what we stand for".
- Values provide the basis for achieving culture change.
- Values help enable people to succeed.
- Values affect our professional practice.
- Values can provide a measurement of success for individuals (i.e., performance reviews).
- Values can provide some stability through change (i.e., which values are remaining, how do we implement the change in line with our values?).

Values and our actions – how we express these Values – convey our beliefs in setting the highest personal and professional standards for conduct in County government.

Each Value and its Implications

ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability means being able to explain ourselves and our actions. We must be able to justify what we do to those to whom we are answerable.

We must show that we have followed the procedures, rules, and laws that regulate us and, if we did not, we must be able to explain why.

Accountability as an Organizational Value Raises Particular Questions

To whom are we accountable? All the stakeholders.

The Assessor's primary stakeholders consist of property owners; property owner's representatives; other government agencies; and the business, financial, and academic communities and others who rely on the objectivity and integrity of the Office. This reliance imposes a public interest responsibility on us. The public interest is defined as the collective well-being of the community of people and institutions the Office serves.

To what are we accountable? We are accountable to the law and the established rules of finance and accounting.

The Assessor's duties are authorized.

Simply put: The State Constitution requires that all taxable property be taxed.¹ The Legislature and the SBE implement this article through statutes and rules. The Assessor applies those laws and rules.

We must be accountable for our decisions and actions. Our duties are authorized by law for the benefit of the public and should not be subordinated to personal gain or advantage.

Why are we accountable to the law? Because we are a public agency.

The Assessor's Office is a public agency and its officers (managers and employees) are the stewards of that agency.

The powers of public officers are limited constitutionally and statutorily. Their acts, to be valid, must find warrant in the law, either expressly or by fair implication.

As public employees, we have a duty of accountability to the organization, the public, the State and the law.

¹ California Constitution, Article XIII A.

Accountability – The Implications

Decision-Making and Actions

Again, we must be accountable for our decisions and actions. Integrity and accountability can accommodate the inadvertent error and the honest difference of opinion; it cannot accommodate deceit or subordination of principle.

Managers

Managers must be role models. They must demonstrate integrity, fairness, and competence and fidelity to the rules. Their behaviors must exemplify these qualities. By these actions, employees must be persuaded that these values are worth emulating and their managers are worth following. Employees, thus led, will find accountability on their own. It may be tough, but if one accepts the job, it is his/her duty. Therefore, managers will:

- Never impose on any employee to perform his/her duty in a manner that violates law or regulation
- Never conduct themselves in a manner that impairs the independence, objectivity, and impartiality of the Office's employees
- Never bypass the chain of command when requesting work reviews
- Never engage in behaviors that impair or compromise their ability to execute the duties of their position with objectivity and impartiality
- Never engage in any form of retaliation when a claim of conduct violation is levied against themselves or their employees

Moreover, managers must inform their superiors of:

- Any personal or professional contacts that can be construed as a conflict of interest
- Any property where an assessment is mandated for which they have financial or familial interest

Employees

Employees are personally responsible for their duties and assignments. Regardless of position in the hierarchy, employees should be encouraged to speak up and speak out against behaviors that cannot be properly accounted for. As members of the organization, they have a duty to work for the public good, work within the law, and help achieve the legitimate common goals of the organization. They must feel secure; they must know that managers will listen to those with concerns, welcome suggestions, and report misconduct. They must be able to rely on a no tolerance policy regarding retaliation.

SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Service Excellence is the ability to consistently meet and manage the expectations of our *customers*.

It may be described as “doing the right thing, at the right time, for the right person, and having the best quality result [outcome].”

Generally it involves:

- Delivering the promise of fair and timely customer service
- Providing a personal touch
- Going the extra mile
- Resolving problems well

Providing *Service Excellence* requires being honest, civil, and competent.

As Public Employees....

A public officer is obligated by virtue of the office to discharge his or her responsibility with integrity and fidelity; he/she is bound to exercise the powers conferred on him/her with disinterested skill, zeal, and diligence, and primarily for the benefit of the public.

Office employees have a duty to serve the public and to do so with competence and fairness.

Service Excellence – The Implications

Public Service and Public Trust

As public employees, we must accept that we have a duty and responsibility to serve the public. Our public interest involves the collective well-being of the community of people and institutions we serve:

- Property owners
- Property owner’s representatives
- Other government agencies
- Business, financial, and academic communities
- Others, such as the media, who rely on the objectivity and integrity of information provided by the Assessor’s Office

Taxpayers have a right to expect Assessor’s staff to discharge their responsibilities with integrity, objectivity, due professional care, and a genuine interest in serving. They are expected to provide quality services with civility and honesty and in a manner that demonstrates competence. Therefore:

- We will provide outstanding public service every day, one taxpayer at a time.
- Customers are a vital part of our work. We are vital to our customers.

Essential Rights and Fairness

We strive to correct inequity in our public dealings.

In accordance with our statutory responsibilities, and to keep and maintain the good faith of the public, we must ensure that any person with a question or complaint gets a hearing and that each person is subject to the same rules as everyone else.

Customer Service

Office employees must balance overall public service with good customer service.

Good public service is not incompatible with good customer service.

In the course of providing public service, we correct a faulty assessment resulting in the refund of money paid on that assessment; we apply exclusions (discounts); and we provide an array of services to help the taxpayers navigate the system. This public service function is similar to how private sector entities deliver customer service when refund of money paid on a faulty product, arrange for discounts, and provide an array of services to assist the customer.

PROFESSIONALISM

A Profession

Typically, professions:

- Are subject to licensing or certification and continuing education.
- Declare in a public way that their members promise to act or behave in certain ways and that the group and the society may discipline those who fail to do so.
- Present a social benefit to society and society accepts the profession, expecting it to serve some important need.
- Issue a code of ethics, stating the standards by which its members can be judged.
- Have a duty toward those they serve; a code of ethics will specify the obligations arising from this duty.
- Have a particularly stringent duty to ensure that their decisions and actions benefit those whom they serve.
- Experience an ethical problem when a conflict arises between these obligations or duties and personal goals.

Assessor's staff members are subject to particular standards. Appraisers must be licensed, and must meet continuing education requirements. Their work is regulated by statute; their expertise presents society with significant benefit; they have a duty toward those they serve; etc.

These are professional standards.

Professionalism – Typical Values

Professions have common values. Those values urge the practitioner to strive for excellence in every aspect of their work. Experienced practitioners act as mentors and teachers and the values they demonstrate become part of the attitudes, behaviors, and skills of those entering the profession. These values provide guidance for promoting professional behavior and for making difficult ethical decisions.

- Altruism: A professional is obligated to attend to the best interest of those they serve rather than his/her own self-interest.
- Accountability: A professional is accountable to those served, the public, and to the regulators of the profession.
- Excellence: A professional is obligated to make a commitment to life-long learning and competence.
- Duty: A professional is obligated to act responsibly toward the community served and abide by the rules and regulations of the profession.
- Honor and integrity: A professional should be committed to being fair, truthful, and straightforward in the course of his/her work.
- Respect for others: A professional should demonstrate respect for their customers and fellow practitioners.

Given our requirements for education, competence, commitment, and compliance with rules and regulations it is no coincidence our values are similar if not identical:

Accountability, **S**ervice Excellence, **P**rofessionalism, **I**ntegrity, **R**espect, **E**quity

Implications - Professionalism Applied

Assessor employees are obliged to act in a way that will serve the public interest and demonstrate commitment to professionalism, policies and regulations, and service standards. In discharging their professional responsibilities, employees may encounter pressures from the public. In resolving any conflicts, employees will act with integrity, guided by the precept that when employees fulfill their responsibility to the public, the state in the widest sense is best served.

Taxpayers have a right to expect Assessor's staff to discharge their responsibilities with integrity, objectivity, due professional care, and a genuine interest in serving. They are expected to provide quality services with civility and honesty and in a manner that demonstrates competence.

We are committed to honor the public trust. In return for the faith that the public places in us, we should seek continually to demonstrate dedication to professional excellence.

INTEGRITY



Integrity is a Part of Each of Our A.S.P.I.R.E. Values.

- There is no **A**ccountability without **I**ntegrity.
- There is no **S**ervice Excellence without **I**ntegrity.
- There is no **P**rofessionalism without **I**ntegrity.
- There is no **R**espect without **I**ntegrity.
- There is no **E**quity without **I**ntegrity.

Types of Integrity: Personal and Professional Integrity

To maintain and broaden public confidence in our Office, employees should perform all professional responsibilities with the highest sense of integrity. Professional integrity requires that we consistently act with professional competence – in accordance with what is authorized by law or what is consistent with the authorized duties of the Assessor – and moral principal.

Personal Integrity

Personal integrity underlies professional integrity. It is the foundation.

Integrity refers to the *whole* moral character of a person – the integrated whole. But, it is the quality of the moral character that counts. Simply subscribing to decent moral principles is not enough (what of a criminal who is consistent with the moral principles of murder for hire). We must act on moral principles and act on them consistently. Moral credit is not automatic after a right action.

We are morally praiseworthy when we perform a right action if we:

- First of all, *know* that the action is right.
- Second, that we *choose* the act for its own sake because we know it is right.
- Third, that we perform the action from a firm and unchangeable character--from the *habit* of performing that kind of action consistently.

We develop moral credit through the habit and practice of performing right actions so that they become part of our identity – our character. A person is described as having integrity when he/she consistently acts from a firmly established character pattern of doing the right thing. Persons of integrity do not stray from acting in accordance with strong moral principle even when it is expedient or personally advantageous to do so.

Personal integrity comes down to standing consistently on moral principal.

Professional Integrity

Professional integrity stems from personal integrity.

Professions exist to provide for particular needs of the communities they serve. Professional integrity begins with the necessary responsibility to serve the fundamental needs of those communities.

Society supports the public professions and grants the professionals the authority to act on their behalf. With the authority to act goes public trust. Society relies on the integrity of its public officials. Violations of that trust are serious breaches of professional integrity.

Meeting needs, being responsible, receiving support, and being granted authority all follow from competence: the guarantee of competence. It takes competence to gain trust and keep it.

Strictly speaking, professional competence on the job is fidelity to the authorized (legal) duties of the Assessor, which are those duties authorized by the Constitution of the State of California, statute, SBE, and the courts.

But, professional integrity is both professional competence and personal integrity. Professional competence alone is not enough. The sound judgment derived from personal integrity is also necessary. We need good people to act competently.

The acceptance of a public office carries with it the obligation to exercise good faith and diligence, even in the absence of express provision on the subject. A public officer is obligated by virtue of the office to discharge his/her responsibility with integrity and fidelity; he/she is impliedly bound to exercise the powers conferred on him/her with disinterested skill, zeal, and diligence, and primarily for the benefit of the public.²

Integrity – Implications

Recognition of Fundamental Constitutional Rights

Professional competence and the fairness inherent in personal integrity demand that our staff protect basic rights:³

Professional Integrity is the support of *Equal Protection* under the law.

- The same means and methods will be applied impartially to all taxpayers.
- Those similarly situated will be treated in an equal manner.

Professional Integrity is the support of *Due Process*.

- Every taxpayer has an opportunity to have a hearing and defend or protect his/her rights.
- The guarantee of due process is a restraint on all departments of government, binding every official, high and low.
- Due process protects the rights and property of any person from arbitrary impairment by the government.

General Ethical implications of Integrity/Professional Integrity

- We will perform our job duties with impartiality, loyalty, honesty, and professionalism without prejudice, favoritism, or personal gain.
- We will act with integrity in all our official activities, avoiding any behavior that would reflect adversely on the Office of the Assessor.
- We will do what is right because it is the right thing to do. We support others who demonstrate integrity. Conversely, we will expose corruption whenever discovered.
- We will be honorable with others and truthful in our endeavors. We will tell the truth, even when doing so may be difficult. We applaud those who exhibit the courage to question, challenge, or report actions that are inconsistent with the law, the Code of Conduct, or County or Assessor policies and procedures.
- We promote an ethical culture and process that encourages excellence in the workplace.

² Dillon, Robin S., "Respect", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2010 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2010/entries/respect/>>

³ See Bibliographical Sources 7 through 17.

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- We mean what we say; our actions speak louder than our words.
- We will accommodate the inadvertent error and the honest difference of opinion, but will not accommodate deceit or violation of our Values or Code of Conduct.
- We will protect and maintain the confidentiality of all information entrusted to us.

Professional integrity is the quality from which the public trust derives and the benchmark against which an employee must ultimately test all decisions as being right and just.

In the absence of specific rules, standards, or guidance, or in the face of conflicting opinions, an employee should test decisions and deeds by asking: *“Am I doing the right thing? Am I doing what a person of integrity would do? Have I retained my integrity?”*

RESPECT

Respect is difficult to define; it involves ourselves, other people, professions, experiences, etc. Generally, we respect something not because we want to, but because we recognize that we have to respect it. Despite ourselves, we are compelled to pay attention and respond appropriately. Respect is not akin to liking or fearing. When we respect something, we heed its call, accord it its due, and acknowledge its claim to our attention.

Categories of Respect

There are many.

Primarily, Respect for Other People

Regardless of rank or accomplishment, each person is a member of our community of rational beings and as such has a particular *dignity*. Our culture, our religions, our social contract, and our Constitution all recognize the innate dignity of the individual.

Although we may not respect a particular person because of what that person says or does, we must still respect their dignity as a person.

Respect for Objects or Abstractions

As discussed earlier in this Attachment, this organization acts under the law. We must respect the Constitution, statutes, codes, and regulations – the authorities that regulate us.

We must respect the legal rights of the public regarding assessment and public service.

We must act with respect toward those things which we may encounter and which are commonly recognized as having value: other cultures, the property of others, etc.

Self-Respect

Something often taken for granted but, if it is threatened or we lose it or we have to regain it, the value becomes painfully clear.

Those with a modicum of self-respect hold themselves to personal expectations and standards, the disappointment of which they would regard as shameful.

Those who see themselves as having sold out, compromised their principles, taken a job they think is beneath them, done someone else's dirty work, or committed a crime or covered one up will be conflicted and suffer some loss of self-respect.

Severely damaged self-respect would inhibit the ability of even the most disciplined employee to consistently behave with respect toward our customers and the law.

Respect – The Implications

Within our context, we are morally and legally bound to respect the members of the public and our fellow employees.

Customers

The customer is not always right, but we value them all equally and they deserve our respect. Therefore, we act with integrity and treat all customers professionally and with dignity.

Employees

We value our fellow employees and their diversity. We foster inclusion, cooperation, and collaboration to achieve common goals – goals that are more significant than what we can do alone. We also appreciate the unique contributions of our employees. Every job function, regardless of title, is integral to the performance of our Office's work.

We will handle even difficult situations with patience and diplomacy, treating people as one would like to be treated and ensuring equitable treatment for all:

- We promote fairness, collegiality, kindness, and the acceptance of others.
- We know *how* we communicate is as important as *what* we communicate.
- We encourage open dialogue and communication. We respect the rights of others to express their opinions even if they differ from our own.
- We will be respectful at all times – whether meeting face-to-face or communicating in writing or by email or phone.

Promoting an ethical and respectful culture helps us to comply with the law and fosters a positive work environment and teamwork. A positive work environment enables employees to be creative and contribute to the fullness of their abilities. It also creates and sustains an organization that we are proud of.

EQUITY

Equity is an old legal term. In England (hence the U.S. and Ireland), equity was a system of law existing side by side with Common Law and statute law (together called the Law) making use of a body of legal doctrines and principles of justice to compel a party to complete a contract (specific performance), stop a party from doing something (injunction), or find a fair remedy for a civil dispute beyond a monetary award.

History of Equity

The goal was to do right and justice. A little history is presented below.

The object of equity is to do right and justice. It does not wait upon precedent that exactly squares with the facts in controversy, but will assert itself in those situations where right and justice would be defeated but for its intervention. The powers of court of equity, dealing with the subject-matters within its jurisdiction, are not cribbed or confined by the rigid rules of law. From the very nature of equity, a wide play is left to the conscience of the chancellor in formulating decrees. It is of the very essence of equity that its powers should be so broad as to be capable of dealing with novel conditions. Equity acts in order to meet the requirements of every case, and to satisfy the needs of progressive social conditions, in which new primary rights and duties are constantly arising, and new kinds of wrongs are constantly committed.

In applying equitable relief, courts follow certain general principles or maxims, a number of which are set forth in the Civil Code. The code provides that the maxims stated therein are not intended to qualify other code provisions, but rather to aid in their just application.⁴

Some of the maxims are straight forward and self - explanatory:

- For every wrong there is a remedy.
- Equity favors substance over form.
- Equity will not lend its aid to accomplish by indirection what the law or its clearly defined policy forbids to be done directly. (Equity does not possess the power to disregard or set aside the express terms of legislation.)

Drawing on these passages, equity may be thought of as an effort to find justice within the law, but to not be thwarted by inflexible rules, give conscience its due, and consider the new and different.

Over time, equity has acquired a meaning outside of law: generally it means impartiality, fairness, and even handedness.

⁴ 30 California Jurisprudence 3d, Equity, Sections 1, 2, 15, 18

Equity – The Implications

In an effort to be equitable, we will be objective, fair, and straight-forward, and act without bias.

We will treat all inquirers equally regardless of how they contact us (e.g., Executive Office, Board of Supervisors, or other outside political entities). None will receive special or priority treatment because of influence. We will apply prescribed administrative remedies impartially. If a dispute between the Office and a property owner cannot be settled administratively and goes to the Assessment Appeals Board, we, the Assessor, will objectively present the facts and advocate the Office's position. We encourage all property owners to take full advantage of their rights to contest assessments.

To ensure equity:

- A public officer is obligated by virtue of the Office to discharge his or her responsibility with integrity, fidelity, skill, zeal, and diligence, and primarily for the benefit of the public.
- Any decisions or acts must be based on County and Office policies and Federal, State, and local laws and regulations.
- Powers conferred on the Office may involve the exercise of judgment or discretion that support the public's trust.

Reference Resources

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Attachment C – Office of the Assessor: Gift and Gratuity Policy

OFFICE OF THE ASSESSOR

EXTERNAL GIFT POLICY

**This DRAFT policy is intended to supersede and replace
Administrative Memorandum #2010-140**

Purpose

As public servants, the Office of the Assessor (Office) employees must maintain the highest level of ethical standards. These ethical standards involve conforming with all legal requirements regarding gifts and avoiding even the appearance of impropriety.

Because the Office has authority over valuations, employees are often times exposed to opportunities to receive meals, gifts, or favors. In most cases, these opportunities are offered without the expectation of a specific favor in return. To eliminate any perception of a conflict of interest, either in appearance or fact, this policy establishes a uniform standard regarding receipt of gifts by Assessor employees.

Policy

- 1.0 No Assessor employee will accept anything of value from anyone other than the County for the performance of their work duties while in the Office.
 - 1.1 No Assessor employee will solicit or accept gifts, meals, gratuities, favors or anything of monetary value from tax agents, taxpayers with matters pending before the County, contractors, consultants, sub lessees, vendors or subcontractors, or any other member of the public except in accordance with this policy.
 - 1.2 If a gift, sample, gratuity, or anything of value is received, which would violate the Office's policy, it should be returned immediately with an acknowledgement of the gift/sample and an explanation of the policy.
 - 1.2.1 Employees may not use samples given to the Office for personal use.
 - 1.3 All offers from current or potential vendors of the County to donate to the Office must be submitted to Management Services or the appropriate purchasing agent/internal purchasing services for review and approval prior to acceptance.
 - 1.4 A gift to an employee's family member who could influence the employee's objectivity is considered a gift to the employee.
 - 1.5 Third-party gifts and payments are prohibited from anyone with business before the Office. This includes a gift or payment made through an intermediary, if the person:

- 1.5.1 Directs that the payment or gift be made to the employee
- 1.5.2 Agrees or acknowledges that the payment or gift be made to the employee
- 1.5.3 Identifies the employee as the person to whom the payment or gift is to be made, or
- 1.5.4 Knows or has reason to know that the payment will be used to make a gift to the employee
- 1.6 It is a violation of this policy for an employee to accept, from any individual or entity listed in section 1.1, travel, entertainment, food, and lodging; reimbursement of an expense; or a loan or contribution, except for the “Exceptions” cited later in this policy.
- 1.7 The Office will not have any raffles where outside entities donate prizes.
 - 1.7.1 The Office will not permit participation in any Office-sponsored raffles by non-County employees.
 - 1.7.2 Any item won in an Office-sponsored raffle is not a gift to the employee, as long as the item won in the raffle was donated by an Office employee who was not acting as an intermediary for another donor.
- 1.8 This policy applies whether or not an employee is on or off-duty.
- 1.9 An employee who violates this policy may be subject to official discipline up to and including dismissal.

Exceptions

All owners of assessed properties in the County of Los Angeles have “business before the Office” either passively or actively. Most employees will have personal/non-professional relationships with members of the public who own assessable property in the County.

- 2.0 This policy is not intended to restrict or prohibit gifts from those with *bona fide* personal relationships except when the employee is asked to use their official position on behalf of the individual with the *bona fide* personal relationship with the employee.
- 2.1 The following exceptions are permitted, providing: a) they do not violate State law, the County Code, or County or Assessor ethical policies and b) employees obtain approval from management prior to the event:
 - 2.1.1 Acceptance of an invitation to attend hospitality activities, which are provided at industry meeting, seminars, or other related functions for the benefit of all industry people and are commonly accepted as being a part of the group activities.
 - 2.1.2 Informational items of nominal value (e.g., calendars, pens, and coffee mugs), which are routinely given by vendors.
 - 2.1.3 Gifts or food among employees on birthdays, holidays, and other similar occasions, provided that the gifts exchanged are nominal in value and are not substantially disproportionate in value.

- 2.1.4 Payments, advances, or reimbursements for travel and related meals and lodging, which are reasonably related to the Office's purpose or policy issues (e.g., speakers at conferences or annual professional conferences) may be allowed under certain conditions.
- 2.2 Gifts from family members or personal relationships are not restricted and do not need to be reported under this policy.
 - 2.2.1 This exception does not apply, however, if a family member has business before the Office and is acting as an agent or intermediary for another person or entity that is the true source of a gift.
- 2.3 If an exception is needed, employees should receive prior approval from management:
 - 2.3.1 Employees can seek approval from their respective Division Chiefs.
 - 2.3.2 If the employees are Division Chiefs, they should receive approval from a member of the Executive Team (e.g., Assistant Assessor, Chief Deputy Assessor, or the Assessor).
 - 2.3.3 If employees are unaware of the possibility of a gift (e.g., brown bag lunch) being offered prior to the event, they should complete Form (TBD) alerting the Office 7 days after the event.

Other Conditions

- 3.0 This policy will apply to all Assessor employees.
- 4.0 This policy will only apply to interaction between an employee and individuals or entities not employed by the Office of the Assessor.
- 5.0 This policy does not apply to customary, celebratory, or honorary gifts and awards given by employees or groups of employees to each other.
- 6.0 This policy is intended to impose additional requirements above and beyond those contained in existing County and State regulations.
- 7.0 Compliance with this policy does not ensure compliance with or excuse non-compliance with the California Political Reform Act of 1974, as amended, and as implemented by the Fair Political Practices Commission, or with applicable County Codes, including but not limited to, Chapter 2.160 regulating County Lobbyists.

Definitions

For purposes of this Policy/Procedure, the following definitions will apply:

1. **“Business before the Office of the Assessor” (Office):** A person or entity who, if within 24 months of offering a gift, gratuity, meal, sample, or ticket(s) to an Office employee, the person or entity:
 - Has or will have any matter pending before the Office
 - Has or will perform services or provide supplies or equipment to the Office
2. **“Gift”:** Any payment, discount, or other benefit provided to any employee that confers a personal benefit for which the employee does not provide payment or services of equal or greater value.
 - A gift is further defined as any bestowal of money or anything of value, or provision of a discount or rebate, to any employee for which nothing of equal or greater value is exchanged, or which is not required by law to be given, or which is given in appreciation of service rendered or perceived rendered by an employee in the course and scope of his/her duties.
 - A gift also includes a “gift to the office” that benefits multiple employees in an office setting. Such gifts include but are not limited to candy, flowers, pastries or any other edibles, or other unsolicited items.
 - A gift does not include:
 - Any discount or rebate made in the regular course of business and offered to the general public without regard to official status
 - Receipt of something of value from those who do not have business before the Office
 - Inheritances
 - Plaques and trophies valued under \$250
 - Plaques or trophies awarded for activities not related to the Office
 - Campaign contributions (*subject to other County and FPPC regulations*)
3. **“Gratuity”:** Money, goods, or services, solicited or unsolicited, which may be offered over and above payment due for services rendered.
4. **A “pass” or “ticket”:** An admission or access to facilities, goods, services, or other benefits, either on a one-time or repeated basis to be used by the employee or given by the employee to another individual(s), including, but not limited to, passes/tickets to entertainment, amusement or recreational events, sporting events, movies, etc.
5. **A “sample”:** Goods or services provided without charge by a vender for trial use to encourage purchase and use by the Office.
6. **“Meal”:** Includes, but not limited to, breakfast, lunch, and dinner; non-meal time refreshments, such as *hors d’oeuvre* and reception buffets; and alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages.

7. **“Family member”:** A spouse, registered domestic partner, child, domestic partner’s child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, a first cousin, and corresponding “step” and “in-law” relationships.
8. **A “*bona fide* personal relationship”:** A family relationship or personal friendship under the following conditions:
 - The relationship may or may not predate the business related contact.
 - The relationship is unrelated to employment or official duties.
 - The relationship exists regardless of employment or official duties.
 - The relationship where any gift is paid for by the friend or family member, not by a company, corporation, or other entity.

Reference Resources

1. Assessor Code of Ethics: <http://intranet/intranet//lac/control/binaryGet.aspx?uploadid=2476>
2. Los Angeles County, California, Code of Ordinances, Title 2 – Administration, Division 4 - Miscellaneous Regulations, Chapter 2.160 - County Lobbyists: <http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientId=16274>
3. FPPC Limitations and Restrictions on Gifts, Honoraria, Travel and Loans:
<http://www.fppc.ca.gov/factsheets/LocalGiftFactSheet2012.pdf>

Strategic Focus: Fiscal Forecasting Model

Overview

The Assessor is responsible for assessing all taxable property within the County and applying all legal exemptions. Upon request made on or before February 20 of each year, Government Code Section 27421 requires the Assessor to provide an estimate of the assessed valuation of property within the County to the local taxing jurisdiction by May 15 for the succeeding fiscal year.

The Assessor's Office has always complied with the requirements of Government Code Section 27421 and successfully met the deadline for issuing the Assessment Roll. Fluctuations in the estimates provided to the County during the past year caused concerns about the accuracy of the forecast. Given the need for increased forecasting accuracy for County budgeting purposes, the Assessor's Office is reviewing current forecasting data and procedures and evaluating methods, tools, and resources to improve the forecasting model.

Critical events leading up to the identification of the need for a new forecasting model during the last year were:

- On April 10, 2012, the Board of Supervisors (BOS) instructed the Auditor-Controller to retain an outside consultant to review the County Assessor's Fiscal Year 2012-13 Assessment Roll Forecast. The request was based on a reduction in the Assessor's Roll value forecast from a 1.77% increase in December 2012 to an increase of only 0.49% in the Assessor's April 2012 forecast. The change represented a drop in the projected increase in the Roll from \$18.6 billion to \$5.1 billion, a decrease of \$13.5 billion.
- On May 14, 2012, the Department of Auditor-Controller issued a "Consultant's Review of Assessor's Fiscal Year 2012-13 Assessed Value Roll Forecast" (Board Agenda Item 74, May 15, 2012). The report confirmed that the Assessor's May 15, 2012, forecast of a 1.14% increase was reasonable. The report outlined areas for the Office to improve the accuracy of its forecasts.
- On June 19, 2012, the BOS nominated Santos H. Kreimann for appointment as Chief Deputy Assessor. On that same day, Assessor John Noguez accepted the Board's nomination and formally appointed him as Chief Deputy Assessor to take effect immediately. As Chief Deputy Assessor, Mr. Kreimann was given complete autonomy and authority over all aspects of the Office, including decisions on all personnel and operational matters. These terms would continue during the course of Assessor Noguez's leave of absence.
- On October 4, 2012, the Executive Team submitted its "Report on Assessor Operations" (referred to as the "100-Day Report") to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). In the report, an assessment of the Office from a management perspective was presented, as well as an outline of a series of strategic priorities, including improvements in the Assessment Roll forecast.

The “100-Day Report” described the forecasting limitations and the actions already begun and remaining to be completed to address the limitations. The report indicated that a new forecasting model would be a strategic priority in the Strategic Plan, outlining that the Office “...would document the action steps, already identified, to be implemented to enhance our capabilities in forecasting property values” for the CEO, BOS, and the County overall.

Charter and Focus

Strategic Priority 1 involved “Building a New Forecasting Model”. Given the importance of the forecast, the Executive Team accepted the responsibility to set the basic parameters and make the high-level decisions in the forecasting model with: a) support from the technical staff of the forecasting unit and b) input from subordinate appraisal managers.

Action Plan

Action Plan II.1: Developing a Fiscal Forecasting Model

Background

Prior to the “100-Day Report” and during the first 100 days, the Office accomplished a number of important initiatives, including:

- Secured funding to acquire the necessary IBM Cognos reporting software that will facilitate a detailed sensitivity analysis of the factors contributing to change in the Assessment Roll.
- Developed an automated system to improve the availability of real estate market data for analysis after it is received from the Registrar/Recorder; the new process delay shortened from 6-8 weeks to 10-20 days.
- Performed methodology reviews on the Transfer and Major Exemptions components, identifying opportunities for improvement in each area.
- Initiated a proof-of-concept with Internal Services Department (ISD), using IBM Cognos, to facilitate analysis for use in the forecast.

Strategies

The Office is currently developing an improved estimation model and process for the annual Assessment Roll forecast in cooperation with CEO and technical ISD staff. The existing forecast methodology will continue to be used in parallel while new methods and processes are developed. New processes will include:

- Use of in-house statistical expertise
- Use of external consultants and subject matter experts in real estate market and macro-economic analysis
- Executive review and approval for base assumptions

Components of the new forecasting model will entail:

- The final forecast will be presented as a range of values, as opposed to a fixed percentage estimate, to allow CEO budget staff to select the most appropriate percentage change for budgetary purposes.
- The Executive Team will seek wider input on the forecast assumptions.
- Each component of the assessment forecast methodology is being broken down into its constituent part, analyzed for consistency and accuracy, and then reassembled and integrated back into the forecast.
- Executive summaries of these forecast components and the underlying assumptions will be prepared, allowing the Executive Team to reach a consensus in guiding the development of the forecast.

In addition, the Office is working on the following technological enhancement that will help facilitate the new forecasting strategy:

- **Business Intelligence (BI) Cognos (Forecasting)** –The Office is working with ISD to focus on compiling and analyzing processing data for property transfers. Subsequent phases during the coming years will be developed for the other components that go into forecasting.

Expected Outcomes/Benefits

- Improved coordination
- Extensive review of each component of the forecast methodology
- Documentation of the assumptions behind each forecast scenario (the forecast will be presented as a range)
- Greater accuracy by not issuing the forecast so early, which allows sufficient time to compile information for the forecast based on year-end (12/31) data
- Executive oversight, which elevates the criticality of producing an accurate forecast
- Better technology, such as Cognos, for automating the forecast, analyzing data, and changing the assumptions
- Use of subject matter experts as needed
- Ongoing refinement each year, based on lessons learned in prior years

Goal II.1: By May 15, 2013, develop a new forecasting model (or at least a hybrid approach that includes the existing forecast methodology along with components of the newly developed model) to prepare the 2013 Roll Forecast.

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
IMPROVED COORDINATION			
A. Develop ongoing working relationship and interfaces between the Office of the Assessor's Operations and Administration functions for improving forecasting capabilities	Assistant Assessor - Administration (AA-Admin), Assistant Assessor - Operations (AA-Op)		In Progress
B. Develop ongoing working relationship and interfaces between the Office of the Assessor's partners – CEO and Auditor-Controller – in improving forecasting capabilities	AA-Admin, AA-Op	CEO, Auditor-Controller	In Progress
C. Each year, meet and develop tactics for continually improving the working relationships between the Office of the Assessor's Operations and Administration functions for improving forecasting capabilities	AA-Admin, AA-Op		Starting September 2013; and each September thereafter
D. Each year, meet and develop tactics for continually improving the working relationships between the Office of the Assessor's partners – CEO and Auditor-Controller – in improving forecasting capabilities	AA-Admin, AA-Op	CEO, Auditor-Controller	Starting September 2013; and each September thereafter
FORECASTING ASSUMPTIONS			
E. Develop executive summaries by forecast component to facilitate Executive review of the forecast	AA-Op	Executive Team; Technical Staff; Appraisers	Completed as of September 2012
F. Develop the forecasting assumptions	AA-Op		In Progress
G. Solicit input on the assumptions	AA-Op		In Progress
H. Finalize the assumptions	AA-Op		

Goal II.1: By May 15, 2013, develop a new forecasting model (or at least a hybrid approach that includes the existing forecast methodology along with components of the newly developed model) to prepare the 2013 Roll Forecast.

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
I. Obtain Executive Team (but not including the Administrative Deputy) sign-off	AA-Op	Executive Team ¹	
J. Update and refine assumptions annually	AA-Op		Each February and May, starting 2013
K. Obtain Executive Team (but not including the Administrative Deputy) sign-off annually	AA-Op	Executive Team ²	Each February and May, starting 2013
TECHNOLOGY ENHANCEMENTS			
L. Develop an automated system to improve the availability of real estate market data for analysis after it is received from the Registrar/Recorder	AA-Admin	ISD, Assessor's Information Technology Division (ITD)	Completed September 2012
M. Perform methodology reviews on the Transfer and Major Exemptions components, identifying opportunities for improvement in each area	AA-Admin		Completed September 2012
N. Develop new estimation methodology for transfers	AA-Admin		Completed December 2012
O. Secure funding to acquire the needed Cognos reporting software	Acting Department Head	CEO, BOS	Completed
P. Initiate a proof-of-concept with ISD, using IBM Cognos, to facilitate analysis for use in the forecast	AA-Admin	ISD	Completed

¹ But not including the Administrative Deputy.

² But not including the Administrative Deputy.

Goal II.1: By May 15, 2013, develop a new forecasting model (or at least a hybrid approach that includes the existing forecast methodology along with components of the newly developed model) to prepare the 2013 Roll Forecast.

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
Q. Implement Phase 1 Business Intelligence (BI) Cognos analysis tools for the transfer and CPI components (the two largest components)	AA-Admin	ISD, ITD	In Progress; December 2012
R. Implement Phase II Business Intelligence (BI) Cognos for the remaining components (Construction, Exemptions, DIV, Cross-Reference and Other, and Personal Property)	AA-Admin	ISD, ITD	In Progress; December 2013
SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS			
S. Procure additional outside resources to be included in the forecast analysis, including subject matter experts in real estate market and macro-economic analysis	CEO	AA-Admin	In Progress
T. Submit State of Work to CEO	AA-Admin	CEO	In Progress
U. Add additional internal staff resources	AA-Admin		In Progress
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER RECOMMENDATIONS			
V. Implement the recommendations in the audit conducted by the Auditor-Controller	AA-Admin, AA-Op		
FORECASTS			
W. Present the preliminary forecast to the CEO budget staff and BOS Board deputies	AA-Admin		Late January/ Early February 2013
X. Present the final forecast to the CEO budget staff and BOS Board deputies	AA-Admin		May 15, 2013
Y. Present the preliminary forecast, using the new forecasting methodology, to the CEO budget staff and BOS Board deputies	AA-Admin		Late January 2014 and each January thereafter

Goal II.1: By May 15, 2013, develop a new forecasting model (or at least a hybrid approach that includes the existing forecast methodology along with components of the newly developed model) to prepare the 2013 Roll Forecast.

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
Z. Present the final forecast, using the new forecasting methodology, to the CEO budget staff and BOS Board deputies	AA-Admin		May 15, 2013; and each May 15 thereafter
ONGOING ANNUAL REFINEMENT OF THE FORCAST ASSESSMENTS			
AA. Each year, building on the prior year's experiences, refine and update the assumptions, technology enhancements, and forecasts in collaboration with County partners	AA-Admin, AA-Op	CEO, Auditor- Controller	Starting February 2013; annual thereafter

Strategic Focus: Positive Culture Transformation

Overview of Goals and Timeline

It is important to ensure that the Office's culture supports and sustains the recent strategic-planning efforts and Office-wide values. Where the Office Mission, Vision, and Values provide the ideological foundation for the Office, the following Action Plans provide a practical framework for building a culture that can achieve all of the Office's strategic goals. Following are the overall goals to be achieved by the Action Plans:

Goal III.1: Improve, Formalize, and Standardize Internal Communication and Customer Service

- III.1.1: Develop and Implement the Strategic Plan Roll-Out Strategy
- III.1.2: Develop and Implement an Office-wide Communication Plan
- III.1.3: Develop and Implement Processes and Standards to Ensure the Office Organizational Chart is Kept Current
- III.1.4: Create Office Point of Contact List and Processes for Keeping it Up-to-date
- III.1.5: Formalize the Office Staff Advocate (Ombudsman) Position

Goal III.2: Develop and Formalize a Comprehensive Staff Development Program

Goal III.3: Develop and Formalize an Office Morale Program

The following table displays the proposed timeframe for completing the strategies. The quarters are on an annual calendar basis (i.e., Q1 is January-March).

GOAL	2013				2014				2015			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Goal 1: Improve, Formalize, and Standardize Internal Communication and Customer Service												
Objective 1.1: Develop and Implement the Strategic Plan Roll-Out Strategy												
Objective 1.2: Develop and Implement an Office-wide Communication Plan												
Objective 1.3: Develop and Implement Processes and Standards to Ensure the Office Organizational Chart is Kept Current												
Objective 1.4: Create Office Point of Contact List and Processes for Keeping it Up-to-date												
Objective 1.5: Formalize the Office Staff Advocate (Ombudsman) Position												
Goal 2: Develop and Formalize a Comprehensive Staff Development Program												
Goal 3: Develop and Formalize an Office Morale Program												

Action Plans

Action Plan III.1: Internal Communication and Customer Service

Background

The Office has historically operated within a “silo” model, which hampers communication and collaboration. This lack of communication has fueled misunderstanding and distrust within the Office and is only magnified by the recent controversy. This culture has created situations, such as:

- Offices and regions operating as isolated entities
- Operational areas (IT, Appraisal, etc.) that distrust each other’s motives
- Line staff questioning the motives of their supervisors and upper management

The Office lacks a cohesive structure in which people know the function, contribution, or importance of other Divisions and the people working in them. Employees have been left demoralized, disengaged, and in search of a common direction.

As indicated in the Ethics Action Plan I, in the recent past, a number of employees were sometimes placed in difficult situations where they feared retaliation and felt they had no recourse other than to comply – and there was no one they could trust who could assist them in their dilemma.

The Office has most recently assigned the responsibilities of an Ombudsman – referred to as a “Staff Advocate” – to a Special Assistant, but not all employees were informed of this assignment. The Special Assistants assigned this responsibility received no training and have had to learn on their own the administrative role, duties, and conduct of this added assignment.

Strategy Summary

The strategy involves improved communications and the re-institution of the Staff Advocate position.

Communications

The heart of any cultural change is the ability to communicate clearly the goals of that change and monitor its progress, a process that begins with an improved internal communication plan. Many elements of the Office will need to coordinate in this process, including, but not limited to, the Public Affairs Team, Chiefs, Directors, Training, IT, and Special Investigations.

The process begins with the roll-out of the Strategic Plan itself through various communications channels that allow for feed-back and ongoing improvements. Once the roll-out has been begun and the Strategic Plan is disseminated, the next step is to formalize and improve internal communications to facilitate continued operational improvement.

Focus on key objectives will be achieved via three initiatives:

1. A clear chain-of-command will be maintained through the use of a correct and up-to-date organizational chart.

2. A proper point of contact list will be created to improve lateral communication in the pursuit of operational goals.
3. The last element of the communication plan is to provide for a “fail-safe” mechanism, personified by a formalized Staff Advocate position, to help identify and eliminate problems with the evolving communication plan on an ongoing basis.

A variety of communication channels need to be addressed:

- Executive management down through the organization and vice-versa
- Between management, supervisors, and line staff
- With related County departments, such as the Auditor-Controller, Treasurer & Tax Collector, Registrar-Recorder, BOS, and Assessment Appeals Boards (AABs)
- Intra- and inter-divisional relationships
- Between District Offices and Hall of Administration Offices

Proposed communication strategies include:

- Holding a quarterly all-staff meeting with short presentations made by various Divisions to highlight their efforts and followed by meaningful discussions to resolve issues, answer questions, identify successes, etc.
- Implementation of informal educational messages, such as “SBE Rule of the Week” or “Value of the Month”

Staff Advocate

Finally, a Staff Advocate provides confidential, neutral assistance to employees to protect against unfair treatment and help resolve conflicts. A Staff Advocate ensures fairness, serves as a source of information and support, and acts as a conduit between conflicting parties.¹ A Staff Advocate must be able to:

- Listen to grievances
- Investigate and resolve complaints
- Educate employees on their rights
- Provide confidential consultations
- Offer options for conflict resolution
- Monitor and report on the number and types of grievances, identifying patterns and problem areas and making recommendations to management on areas for improvement
- Maintain confidentiality, integrity, openness, and objectivity
- Act independently and impartially

¹ http://www.ehow.com/facts_6776207_ombudsman-job-description.html#ixzz2CFXSOsyT

A Staff Advocate or Ombudsman is a profession where individuals can seek certifications or attend conferences and training offerings, such as those offered through the International Ombudsman Association and elsewhere.

Expected Outcomes/Benefits

- Improved achievement of Office goals attributable to better mission focus
- Better cooperation between operational areas, offices, divisions, and regions
- Individuals whose actions better reflect the core values espoused by the Office
- Heightened respect for colleagues and the Office
- A neutral resource – the Staff Advocate – that is neutral who can assist employees in difficult work situations

Goal III.1: Improve, Formalize, and Standardize Internal Communication and Customer Service

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
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Objective III.1.1: In Q1 2013, Develop and Implement a Strategic Plan Roll-Out Strategy – See APT-PACT Goal 2: Support the Implementation of the Strategic Plan

Objective III.1.2: By Q2, 2014, Develop and Implement an Office-wide Communication Plan

A. Develop an internal communication strategy, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify internal stakeholders and audiences b. Formally establish a Communication Support Team (CST) c. Mission d. Goals and objectives, considering to develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. An internal customer service policy ii. Email and other communications protocol e. Accountability points and performance measurement 	PACT	CST	Q1 – Q3 2013
B. Develop Action Plans, considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Priorities b. Communication format(s) c. Timeline(s) d. Soliciting stakeholder input 	PACT	CST	Q3 2013 – Q1 2014

Goal III.1: Improve, Formalize, and Standardize Internal Communication and Customer Service

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
C. Develop a budget for implementing the Communication and Customer Service Plan	PACT	Executive Team, CST	Q4 2013
D. Implement the Internal Communication and Customer Service Plan	PACT	Executive Team, ITD, CST	Q2 2014
E. Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Communication and Customer Service Plan and make revisions as-needed	PACT	ITD, CST	Ongoing once implemented

Objective III.1.3: By Q2 2013, Develop and Implement Processes and Standards to Ensure the Office Organizational Chart is Kept Current

A. Develop a system for continually updating the Office Organizational Chart, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Reviewing the protocol for identifying and communicating needed modifications b. Frequency of updates c. Standardize the communication of staff rotations and promotions to all employees d. Communicate policy and procedures to all Office staff e. Maintenance of the Office phone list and transfer checklist 	Executive Secretaries	Executive Support Staff	Q1 2013
B. Implement the Office Organizational Chart updating system	Executive Secretaries	Executive Support Staff, PACT	Q2 2013
C. Monitor progress and address any issues identified with the Office Organizational Chart updating system	Executive Secretaries	Executive Support Staff	Ongoing once implemented

Objective III.1.4: By Q2, Create Office Point of Contact List and Processes for Keeping it Up-to-date

A. Develop an Office Point of Contact List, considering chain-of-command issues	CST	Executive Team, Executive Secretaries, Chiefs/PAs/Managers	Q1 2013
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Goal III.1: Improve, Formalize, and Standardize Internal Communication and Customer Service

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
B. Address the need to have access to related departments', such as the Auditor-Controller, Treasurer & Tax Collector, Registrar-Recorder, BOS, and AABs, contact information	CST	Executive Team, Special Investigations, Chiefs/PAs/Managers	Q2 2013
C. Launch the Point of Contact List	PACT	Executive Secretaries	Q2 2013
D. Develop a system for monitoring and updating the Office Point of Contact List on an ongoing basis, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Protocol for identifying/receiving needed modifications b. Frequency of updates c. Protocol for how and to whom revisions should be communicated 	PACT	Executive Secretaries	Q2 2013

Objective III.1.5: By Q4 2014, Formalize the Office Staff Advocate (Ombudsman) Position

A. Establish an independent Office Staff Advocate position; review the current Staff Advocate assignments and determine if having the assignment as an extra duty suffices or if a full-time Office Staff Advocate is needed to encourage trust in the position <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Solicit staff input b. Research the implementation of the Ombudsman in other jurisdictions and organizations 	Executive Team	CST	Q1 2013
B. Review and update the Staff Advocate roles and responsibilities and any related policies, including administrative memos	Human Resources	CST	Q2 – Q3 2013
C. Identify and appoint the Staff Advocate(s), considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Appointment b. Competitive 	Executive Team	Human Resources	Q3 2013 – Q3 2014

Goal III.1: Improve, Formalize, and Standardize Internal Communication and Customer Service

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
D. Provide Staff Advocate training to the selected Staff Advocate(s)	Human Resources	CST	Q4 2014
E. Identify the information that should be communicated to all Office staff about the Staff Advocate(s), including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The identity and availability b. The purpose of the Staff Advocate position 	PACT	Staff Advocate	Q4 2014
F. Identify and implement the best way(s) to communicate to all Office staff about the Staff Advocate, considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Articles in <u>The Valuator</u> b. Sharing information on the Office Intranet c. E-mail communications d. Holding a series of informational staff forums Hall of Administration and at each of the District Offices e. Monitor and evaluate ongoing communication strategies 	PACT	Staff Advocate, CST	Q4 2014 – Q1 2015
G. Develop and implement an anonymous feedback mechanism to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Staff Advocate	Human Resources	Staff Advocate	Q4 2014 and ongoing once implemented

Action Plan III.2: Staff Development Program

Background

Formal staff development at the Office is limited. Beyond initial training and State-mandated training sessions, the Office lacks institutional support to develop employees. The responsibility of training each employee is handed over to the employee's superior. Managers are left to depend on their own innate abilities rather than being trained in established management practices.

Currently, the only formal training provided by the Office is through the Training Section, which has the resources to maintain only a minimum scope of work. Without any sort of overarching staff-development program, employees are not encouraged or incentivized to broaden their skills. Those seeking to increase their knowledge have limited in-house resources. Before budget cuts, external sources were offset by a modest education reimbursement fund, giving employees an incentive to expand on their knowledge. Without incentives and support, even motivated employees are left unsatisfied and with untapped potential.

The lack of staff development opportunities has created a culture of stagnation. Employees are not as effective as they could be and find that what motivation they have is not appreciated. In some cases, staff must leave the Office to advance their careers, which may lead to loss of knowledge for a section and low morale.

Strategies

Staff development is expected to focus on the following areas:

- Guidance for all staff for career advancement through:
 - Internal resources
 - Mentoring, such as a newer employee being paired with an experienced staff member who provides guidance and acts as a mentor
 - Clearly defined career paths and avenues for promotion
 - Cross-training
 - Recognition of and respect for committee participation
 - Dedicated and credentialed training staff
 - External resources
 - Compensation and other support for expensive, job-related classes
 - Compensation and other support for conferences, such as IAAO
 - Guest lecturers and trainers
- Professional training for managers to include items such as:
 - Team-building and interpersonal relations
 - Anger management and conflict resolution
 - Civil Service rules
 - Standardization of performance evaluations

Expected Outcomes/Benefits

In creating a formal and comprehensive staff development program, the expected benefits include:

- Developing an expert and knowledgeable staff that is better prepared to handle both technical and “people” issues with customers, colleagues, employees, etc.
- Creating a more effective management team
- Building a more satisfied and happier staff

Ultimately, the goal is not just to offer more training sessions, but to build an environment that inspires and empowers employees to take control of their development. Through this, we aim to create an Office culture in which employees stand by our motto, continually strive for excellence, and are more effective, professional, and satisfied.

Goal III.2: By Q4 2014, Develop and Formalize a Comprehensive Office Staff Development Program

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
A. Research and catalogue all staff development opportunities currently available to Office staff	Training	HR	Q1 – Q3 2013
B. Identify any gaps in the staff development opportunities currently available, considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Management and supervisory training b. Professional development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. College courses ii. Conferences and workshops c. Cross-training d. Mentorships e. Executive lecture series 	Training	HR	Q3 2013 – Q2 2014
C. Survey Office staff to identify current obstacles to participating in staff development opportunities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Lack of tuition reimbursement b. Limited flexible scheduling opportunities 	Training	HR, PACT, CST	Q3 2013 – Q2 2014
D. Prioritize and address the identified obstacles	Training	HR	Q3 2013 – Q2 2014

Goal III.2: By Q4 2014, Develop and Formalize a Comprehensive Office Staff Development Program

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
E. Identify existing and/or develop new opportunities to address the identified staff development gaps, considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Online training b. Outside training facilities c. Training provided at other County Departments d. Dedicated and credentialed training staff 	Training	HR	Q4 2013 – Q3 2014
F. Develop an easy-to-navigate online staff development library and/or calendar, considering coordination with the Learning Net	Training	HR IT	Q2 – Q4 2014
G. Develop a mechanism for systematically identifying and implementing any needed updates to the online staff development library and/or calendar	Training	HR IT	Q2 – Q4 2014
H. Institutionalize a mechanism for systematically identifying and addressing future staff development needs	Training	HR IT	Q4 2014
I. Monitor the success of and address any issues identified regarding the Staff Development Program	Training	HR	Ongoing once implemented

Action Plan III.3: Office Morale Program

Background

The Office has experienced limited success with activities that would bring employees together as a group. Some Divisions encouraged group activities while others were indifferent. Over time, even established traditional activities would drift if a particular employee retired or was transferred to another unit. Employees expressed disappointment in the lack of formalized recognition or even team-building activities. Cultivation of these activities has not occurred in a number of years and, at times, was discouraged.

The Office is endowed with employees of diverse backgrounds which, given a chance, can create a dynamic organization that provides superior service to the public. To have a premier organization, the workforce must have qualities that meet high standards and expectations. Employees who are satisfied in the workplace work more efficiently and productively. Management must ensure that high morale is maintained to create synergy. If employees and management can work together with trust and respect, obstacles and restrictions will be overcome and a vision of a fully functional team will emerge.

Finding encouragement in our new values acronym, A.S.P.I.R.E., Professionalism and Respect are the focus in the development and formalization of an Office Morale Program.

Strategies

- Develop organizational framework to support an Office Morale Program in collaboration with Human Resources
- Engage Office staff through surveys and focus groups to encourage participation as stakeholders
- Encourage team-building (i.e. birth announcements, informal meetings, etc.)
- Partner with management to address implementation, monitoring, and funding needs
- Initiate an Office Recognition Program
 - Office-wide on a formal basis
 - Informal efforts at local offices and within units

Expected Outcomes/Benefits

- Satisfied, motivated, and focused employees
- Mutual respect for each other at all levels of the organization
- Higher productivity
- Better quality in work product
- Improved morale
- A strong, highly professional, and functional organization

Goal III.3: By Q3 2014, Develop and Formalize an Office Morale Program

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
A. Establish a group/unit to develop and manage the Office Morale Program	HR	Employee Program Coordinator	Q3 2013
B. Solicit input from Office employees regarding an Office Morale Program, considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. An online survey b. Focus groups 	HR	PACT	Q3 2013 – Q4 2013
C. Analyze and prioritize input from Office employees and identify ideas to consider for implementation, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. An Office Recognition Program b. An Office Activities and Team-building Program 	HR	PACT, Staff Advocate, Executive Staff	Q4 2013 – Q1 2014
D. Develop an organizational framework that can support an Office Morale program	HR	Executive Staff	Q4 2013 – Q1 2014
E. Address funding needs for an Office Morale Program	HR	Executive Staff	Q2 2014
F. Implement Office Morale Program	HR	Executive Staff	Q3 2014
G. Monitor progress and address any issues identified with the Office Morale Program	HR	PACT, Staff Advocate	Q3 2014 and ongoing
H. Develop and implement a continual means for employee input to the Office Morale Program, considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Building on employee suggestion programs b. Focus groups c. Surveys d. Town hall meetings e. Brown bag meetings 	HR	PACT	Q3 2014 and ongoing

IV Strategic Focus: Human Capital and Organizational Development

Charter and Focus

Both the Executive Team and the Action Planning Team (APT) focusing on Ethics had discussions pertaining to:

- Performance Evaluations and Appraisals of Promotability
- Succession Planning and Career Paths
- Business Continuity Planning
- Delegation of Authority and Chain-of-Command
- Training and Development
- Related topics

Therefore, these topics have been integrated into a broader topic, called “Organizational Development” or OD.

OD is a deliberately planned effort to increase an organization's viability and readiness to accept future change. These changes might involve new technologies, new work processes, periods of uncertainty, new values, or new work culture orientations. The aim is to ensure that any changes result in positive outcomes and impact on the work environment and involved people.

Our people are our most important asset. As stated in our motto: ***We Value People and Property.*** People are cited first, further emphasizing the importance we place on our people. Underlying OD are humanistic values. Margulies and Raia¹ articulated these OD values as:

- Providing opportunities for people to function as human beings rather than as resources in the productive process
- Providing opportunities for each organization member, as well as for the organization itself, to develop to his or her full potential
- Seeking to increase the effectiveness of the organization in terms of all of its goals
- Attempting to create an environment with exciting and challenging work
- Providing opportunities for people in organizations to influence the way in which they relate to work, the organization, and the environment
- Treating each human being as a person with a complex set of needs, all of which are important in his/her work and life

¹ Newton Margulies (1972). *Organizational Development: Values, Process, and Technology*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Co.. pp. 3.

Below are some OD principles:

Collaboration

- The basic building blocks of an organization are groups. Therefore, the basic units of change are groups, not individuals. The organization will benefit from improved interpersonal and group processes.
- People support what they help create. People affected by a change must be allowed active participation and a sense of ownership in the planning and conduct of the change.
- Higher levels of trust and cooperation among organizational members is key. Reduced inappropriate competition between parts of the organization and the development of a more collaborative approach results in better outcomes.

Communications

- More effective and open communication must be built on mutual trust between and across organizational levels.

Internal Work Styles

- A healthy organization develops the ability to cope with organizational problems of all kinds.
- Decision-making should occur where the information sources are, rather than in a particular role or level of hierarchy.
- Development of appropriate leadership styles is critical for developing an organization.
- Managers need skills in dealing with destructive conflict.
- Executive office, divisions, sections, units, and individuals continuously manage their affairs against goals. Controls are interim measurements, not the basis of managerial strategy.

OD principles are by nature optimistic – believing that people can achieve higher levels of development and accomplishment. Also central to OD is the need to be scientific – develop plans, take actions, measure results, and make adjustments to achieve greater heights of organizational performance and excellence.

This chapter contains three Action Plans as starting points for approaching the Office of the Assessor from an OD perspective:

- Action Plan IV.1: Recruiting and Developing Individuals with Ethical Orientations
- Action Plan IV.2: Professional Development and Succession Planning
- Action Plan IV.3: Chain-of-Command and Delegation of Authority

Action Plans

Action Plan IV.1: Recruiting and Developing Individuals with Ethical Orientations

Background

The Office of the Assessor believe ethics should be integrated into our performance evaluations, promotion selection, and recruitment processes.

- **Performance Evaluations (PEs).** We currently do not perceive that our Performance Evaluations (PEs) are positive experiences that result in constructive feedback for performance improvement. In the past, many employees felt that PE's were unfair.
- **Appraisals of Promotability (APs).** The Appraisals of Promotability (APs) are perceived to be too subjective and do not include consideration of ethics, which should be based on the proposed Code of Conduct (Action Plan I).
- **Recruitment.** Despite adverse media coverage, the Office remains an attractive place to work and receives large numbers of applications in comparison to the number of individuals to be hired. We have not developed recruitment strategies to ensure that we are not only recruiting people who can master the technical skills of being an appraiser in the Office, but who are also ethical. We want to recruit the best and the brightest, but also individuals who will embrace out desired ethical practices and Values in our workplace.

Strategies

Managers and supervisors need the resources and ability to hire, promote, and recognize employees who excel in their responsibilities and exhibit exemplary relationships with others. They must provide constructive feedback, perform annual PEs, support professional development, and take corrective disciplinary action when necessary to ensure accountability.

Expected Outcomes/Benefits

- Instill and perpetuate an ethical work culture

Goal IV.1: Recruit and develop a workforce grounded in a shared ethical orientation

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
A. Review and develop a more objective Performance Evaluation (PE) process	Administrative Deputy	DHR	March 2014
B. Review and develop a more objective Appraisal of Promotability (AP) process	Administrative Deputy	DHR	March 2014
C. Develop an organizational "fit" test/criteria regarding ethical behaviors during recruitment	Administrative Deputy	DHR	December 2013

Action Plan IV.2: Professional Development and Succession Planning

Background

Historically, the Office of the Assessor has devoted little attention to the development of its management ranks in understanding organizational theory, succession planning, career development, human dynamics, and people management, including their development.

Succession planning refers to the identification and development of potential successors in an organization. Within the public sector, it is important that the opportunities to succeed be available to those who qualify and pursue them. There are no guarantees regarding whom the next successors may be or, for that matter, should be.

A well-developed succession planning process increases the retention of superior employees because they recognize that time, attention, and skill development is being invested in them for the purpose of career development. When management continues to challenge and reward talented employees, employees are less likely to seek opportunities elsewhere. Moreover, as part of transparency, it is important that employees understand the kinds of skill sets they need to acquire to be competitive and achieve the next level in the organizational hierarchy.

Developing leadership talent is a long-term investment. A working succession system results in having more than one good person available for a key job. Real success requires choices between two or more qualified people. To have choices, the Office needs to identify who is ready now and what it will take to make others ready when they are needed.

Finally, in the event of a disaster or interruption in the work, it is important that the Office have “bench strength” – a variety of people who can step in and sustain operations.

Strategies

As a starting point, the Division Chiefs developed a “straw model” of a “Matrix on Job Skills for Strategic Workforce Planning” for executive and management positions. This model is consistent with the approached use by other County departments. The Office can use this model as a starting point for this Action Plan. This Action Plan focuses on:

- Developing a Succession Plan
- Identifying career paths
- Establishing a business continuity strategy in terms of the people currently in place
- Engaging Senior Management in discussions and decisions regarding resource reallocations and staff rotations and redeployments

The Action Plan also builds on the following major organizational hierarchy and ranks within the Office of the Assessor:

- **Executives**
 - Assessor
 - Chief Deputy Director
 - Assistant Assessors
 - Directors and Administration Deputy

■ **Appraiser Hierarchy**

- **Senior Management – Divisions:** Division Chiefs and Chief Appraisers over Major Properties, Major Real Estate, District Offices, Ownership, etc.
- **Management – Sections:** Chief Appraisers and Principal Assessors
- **Supervisory – Units:** Supervising Appraiser
- **Individual Contributors:** Appraiser Specialist, Appraiser, and Appraisers-IT

■ **Administrative Ranks**

- Human Resources
- Finance
- IT
- Ownership
- Legal
- Mapping
- Training
- Other

■ **Support Staff**

- Executive/Senior Management Secretary
- Staff Assistant
- Chief Clerk
- Intermediate Clerk

- **Specialists:** Supervising Special Assistants, Special Assistants (Unclassified), and Special Assistants (Classified)

[Expected Outcomes/Benefits](#)

Defining the critical success factors for each organizational level enables management and aspiring employees to identify potential matches for the organization's future needs and the aspirations of individual employees.

- Employees benefit because they can craft a career plan for discussion with their manager. They can use their career plan to define how they can increase their job performance and satisfaction.
- The organization benefits from:
 - Employee ownership of their career success and work satisfaction
 - Better employee engagement and stronger employee/manager partnerships and coaching
 - Improved satisfaction, performance, and engagement
 - Continuing dialogue and a common language for discussing career, performance and mutual success
 - More strategic employee development to benefit the organization and employees
 - Strengthened performance management systems
 - Organizational culture change
 - Development and retention of "high potential" employees
 - Employees who are equipped to own their development and careers

Goal IV.2: Focus on leadership development and develop a succession planning framework

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING			
A. Launch a leadership and management development and training program	Acting Department Head; Consultants	Executive Team; Division Chiefs	In Progress, started February 2013
DESIGN OF CAREER PATHS AND SUCCESSION PLANNING FRAMEWORK			
B. Review OD, design, and hierarchy concepts with Executive Team	Consultant		Completed
C. Review OD, design, and hierarchy concepts with Division Chiefs	Consultant		Completed
D. Apply organizational design principles to the Office, focusing on progress from Supervisory Appraiser to Principal Appraiser to Division Chief to Executive ranks	Consultant	Division Chiefs	Initiated (See Matrix)
E. Present the career path/succession planning framework to the Executive Team	Division Chiefs		Completed January 2013
F. On the basis of the Executive Team's feedback to the framework, decide whether this approach is useful. If so, proceed with the following steps; if not, modified or abandon the plan.	Administrative Deputy	Executive Team	June 2013
G. Have Division Chiefs complete a self-evaluation of their skills vis-à-vis the career path/succession planning framework (Note: Some of this may be covered under the Leadership Training Program in 2014.)	Division Chiefs		May be part of Leadership Development
H. Hold 1:1 meetings with Executives and Division Chiefs to review the individual career path/succession plans, applying a career developmental perspective	Executive Team	Division Chiefs	TBD 2014
PILOT TEST AND REFINEMENT: DIVISION CHIEFS AND PRINCIPAL APPRAISERS			
I. Meet with union representatives and outline the planned approach for succession planning/career paths	Administrative Deputy		TBD 2014
J. <u>Assessments</u> : Employees and their managers complete assessments of the job skills, knowledge, abilities, work styles, and business challenges	Division Chiefs	Principal Appraisers	TBD 2014

Goal IV.2: Focus on leadership development and develop a succession planning framework

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
K. <u>Workshops</u> : Employees attend an interactive workshop that integrates personal values clarification, feedback analysis, idea generation, action planning, and coaching. Needs to be a neutral, collaborative setting for employees to identify actions they can take to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Increase satisfaction (What do I get from the job that makes it meaningful?) b. Deliver expected levels of performance (What do I need to do?) 	Division Chiefs	Principal Appraisers	TBD 2014
L. <u>Action</u> : Employees leave the workshop with a plan of action. They meet with their managers and start an ongoing partnership and dialogue focused on mutual success. During that session, they clarify perceptions of the job, discuss ideas, and agree on plans to sustain motivation and achieve organizational objectives.	Principal Appraisers	Division Chiefs	TBD 2014
ROLL OUT – To be Determined (TBD)			
M. Refine the approach and repeat the process with Supervising Appraisers: Assessments, Workshops, Action	Division Chiefs, Principal Appraisers	Supervising Appraisers	TBD 2014
N. Refine the approach and repeat the process with Appraisers: Assessments, Workshops, Action	Division Chiefs, Principal Appraisers, Supervising Appraisers	Appraisers	TBD 2014
O. Refine the approach and repeat the process with other career groupings (e.g., Administrative, ITD, Ownership, Support Staff, etc.): Assessments, Workshops, Action	Division Chiefs	Administrative, IT, and Support Staff	TBD 2014

Goal IV.2: Focus on leadership development and develop a succession planning framework

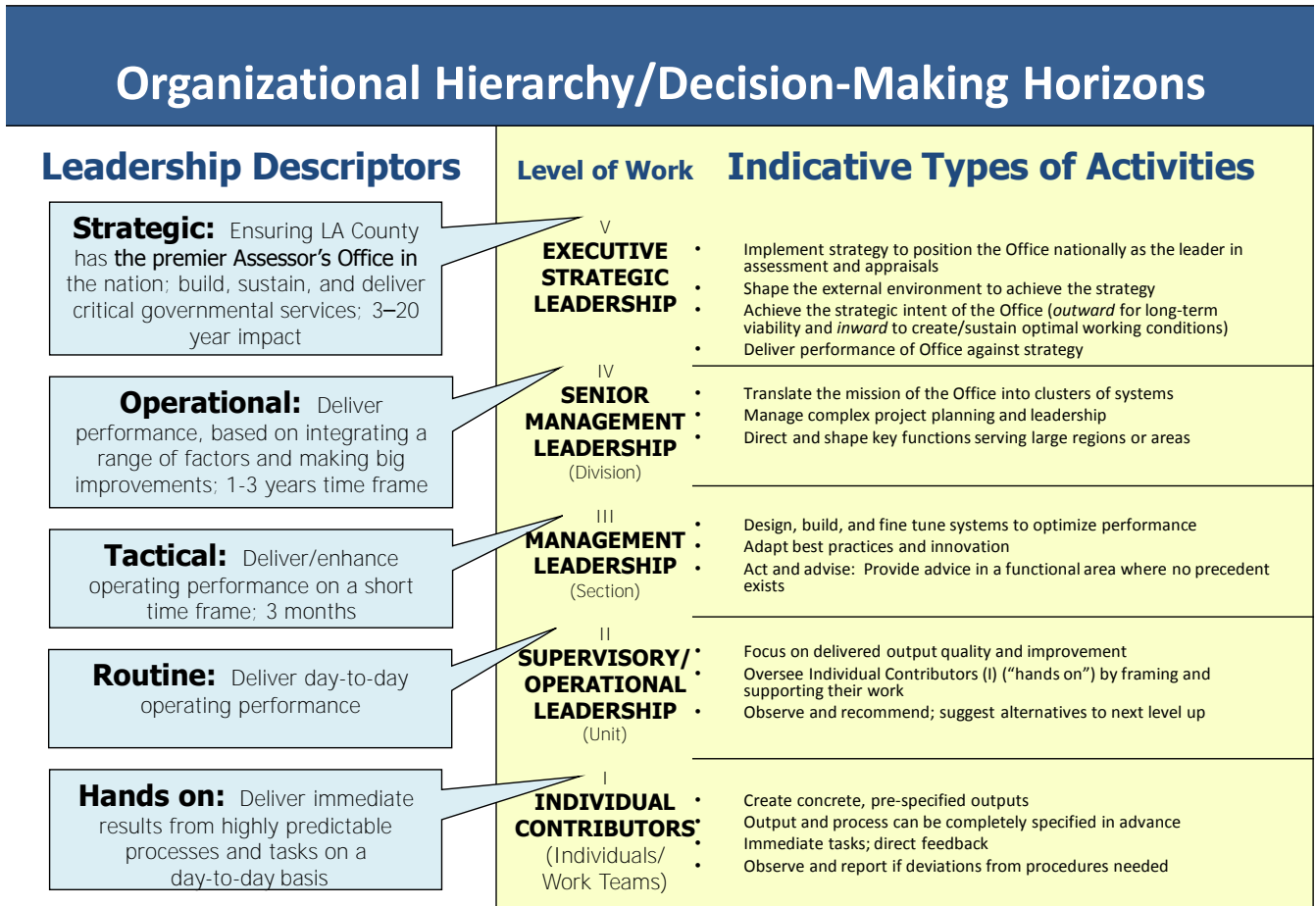
Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
REFINE AND ANNUALLY UPDATE			
P. Review progress made against plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Executives review Division Chiefs b. Division Chiefs review Principal Appraisers and other direct reports c. Principal Appraisers review Supervising Appraisers d. Supervising Appraisers review Individual Contributors/Staff e. Similar hierarchical reviews in the Administrative, IT, and Support Staff ranks 	Administrative Deputy		TBD 2014
Q. Make necessary modifications and update plans	Administrative Deputy		TBD 2014
R. Review class specifications; decide if jobs are complex enough to warrant a one-year probationary period	Administrative Deputy	DHR; union representatives	July 2013
S. Extend probation period within job specifications if warranted	DHR	Administrative Deputy/ Steven Hernandez	TBD
RESOURCE REALLOCATIONS			
T. Identify opportunities for staff rotations or resource reallocations	Division Chiefs	Executive Leadership	April 2013
U. Implement redeployments	Executive Leadership	Division Chiefs	July 2013; July Each Year Thereafter

Action Plan IV.3: Chain-of-Command and Delegation of Authority

Strategies

Rebuilding the Office will require reinstituting a chain of command with enforcement of policies, procedures, employee protection, and checks-and-balances (Ethics Action Plan I) and agreed-to delegation of authorities (this Action Plan).

The graphic displays a framework for thinking conceptually about the chain of command and delegation of authority.



Source: KH Consulting Group, Adapted from The Empower Group, Canada.

Management oversight – which involves Executives, Division Chiefs, supervisors, and lead employees – is paramount to the success and well-being of the Assessor's operations. High productivity, good morale, and efficiency require a fair, open, and nurturing work environment.

Moreover, the work focus among the Senior Management is too heavily focused on administrative, workflow, and technical aspects – approximately 80% of the time – versus people management and crisis intervention. The Executive and Senior Management need to shift more time to developing people and planning and delegate more of the operations to their respective direct reports.

Employees should take administrative matters to their immediate supervisors. Similarly, they should be encouraged to take ethical matters to them as well. In turn, all involved in management oversight should endorse ethical decision-making as a regular business activity by:

- Building awareness of and implementing the Office's Values and Code of Conduct in their own behavior and that of their employees
- Establishing effective communications with their employees
- Demonstrating expertise and professionalism
- Serving as mentors to employees
- Encouraging personal and professional growth
- Promoting safety in the workplace
- Ensuring the provision and proper use of resources
- Implementing rules and regulations
- Prohibiting any form of harassment, discrimination, or retaliation

Expected Outcomes/Benefits

By establishing a chain-of-command for day-to-day operations and maintaining the checks and balances and enforcement initiatives, outlined in the Ethics Action Plans, we will have such outcomes as:

- Working relationships between management/supervisors and employees will promote openness, collegiality, and mutual respect.
- Management/supervisors will share pertinent information that is timely and accurate as part of collaboration. Such collaboration is particularly important when involving changes in work priorities, Assessor policies, projects, and events or new rules and regulations.

Goal IV.3: Formally define the chain of command and delegated authorities

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
A. Establish routine meetings with the Executive Team and the Division Chiefs to review issues that cut-across the Office and progress being made vis-à-vis the Strategic Plan (this document), the management audit, and management initiatives	Executive Team	Division Chiefs	February 2013; Monthly Thereafter
B. Engage Division Chiefs in new initiatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Consult with them while formulating new initiatives b. Solicit their advice about the roll-out process prior to implementation c. Establish uniform roll-out procedures d. Establish criteria for evaluating success e. Share information so the Division Chiefs can respond to employee queries in a uniform manner (e.g., Narrative One, Policy 4080, Rule 2) 	Executive Team	Division Chiefs	Varies, Dependent on the Initiative
C. Develop delegation skills; identify what kinds of work can be delegated at what levels of the organization (Note: Some of this can be covered as part of the Leadership Development Program)	Division Chiefs	Leadership Development Program	Beginning February 2013



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, OFFICE OF THE ASSESSOR

DRAFT MATRIX ON JOB SKILLS FOR STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING: Executive and Management Positions

Text in italics indicates desirable, but not mandatory, skills.

Skill Area	Supervisory: Supervising Appraisers	On-the-Job Training (OJT)	Mentor	Internal Training	County Training	Outside Training	Section Management: Principal Assessors	On-the-Job Training (OJT)	Mentor	Internal Training	County Training	Outside Training	Senior Management: Division Chiefs, Chief Appraisers	On-the-Job Training (OJT)	Mentor	Internal Training	County Training	Outside Training	Senior Management Evaluation	Self-	Development Opportunity	Expectations Met	Mastery	Executive Team: Assessor, Acting Department Head, Chief Deputy Director, Assistant Assessors, Directors, and Administrative Deputy
Technical Skills	Must have the technical skills required at this level; this matrix sets forth the non-technical skills						Must have the technical skills required at this level; this matrix sets forth the non-technical skills						Must have the technical skills required at this level; this matrix sets forth the non-technical skills											Must have the technical skills required at this level; this matrix sets forth the non-technical skills
Appraisals	Has mastery of appraisal skills																							
General	Must possess the skills of an Appraiser PLUS the skills delineated below						Most possess all of the skills at the Supervisory level PLUS the skills delineated below						Most possess all of the skills at the Supervisory and Section Management levels PLUS the skills delineated below											Most possess all of the skills at the Supervisory, Section Management, and Senior Management levels PLUS the skills delineated below
Budgeting							Prepare initial projection of workload volume (e.g, hours per event, rates, etc.)						Oversee and prepare Division Budget development and implementation by formulate the Work Plan, based on People resources needed (FTEs)											Oversee Department Budget development and implementation; understand governmental budgeting issues and requirements; and apply CEO guidance to Budget decisions
							Propose non-staffing/expense needs						Formulate expense budget											Consolidate and approve budget
							Evaluate staffing / workload needs and recommend						Review recommended changes in staffing based on											
Resource Allocation	Supervise day-to-day workload planning; adjust resources assignments on a real-time basis						Monitor performance outcomes of Supervising Appraisers against workload reallocations						Develop annual Work Plans of resource requirements based on performance outcomes (see Budgeting)											
							Reallocate resources based on anticipated workload against plans -- 1 to 3 months out						Reallocate resources based on anticipated workload against plans -- 4 to 12 months out											
													Formulate reallocation of resources across Divisions											Approve resource reallocations across Divisions
Planning							Focus on short-term tactical initiatives that may take 3 to 12 months o achieve						Focus on interim strategic and change management initiatives that may take 3 months to 3 years to achieve											Focus on longer term strategic and change management initiatives that may take 3 or more years to achieve
Decision-Making/ Delegation of Authority	Must have solid, logical decision-making skills						Must have solid, logical decision-making skills						Must have solid, logical decision-making skills											Must have solid, logical decision-making skills
	Make logical decisions that involve appraisal judgements						Make logical decisions that involve managing the section						Make logical decisions that involve managing the division; coordinate decisions across divisions											
	Make logical decisions that involve non-appraisal issues																							
	Make logical decisions that involve subordinates																							



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, OFFICE OF THE ASSESSOR

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Skill Area	Supervisory: Supervising Appraisers	On-the-Job Training (OJT)	Mentor	Internal Training	County Training	Outside Training	Section Management: Principal Assessors	On-the-Job Training (OJT)	Mentor	Internal Training	County Training	Outside Training	Senior Management: Division Chiefs, Chief Appraisers	On-the-Job Training (OJT)	Mentor	Internal Training	County Training	Outside Training	Senior Management Evaluation	Self-	Development Opportunity	Expectations Met	Mastery	Executive Team: Assessor, Acting Department Head, Chief Deputy Director, Assistant Assessors, Directors, and Administrative Deputy
	Implement written and authorized policies (for crew)						Implement written and authorized policies (for region)						Formulate policies (e.g., Board of Equalization)											Interface with external stakeholders and legislators
							Interpret directives; implement directives						Draft Administrative Policy memoranda											
	Adhere to handbooks, Revenue & Taxation (R&T), BOE, Administrative Memoranda, etc.						Enforce adherence to handbooks, Revenue & Taxation (R&T), BOE, Administrative Memoranda, etc.						Monitor compliance											
	Implement written and authorized policies (for crew)						Implement written and authorized policies (for region)						Approve changes to some handbooks and policy manuals											Approve changes to handbooks and policy manuals
	Recommend improvements and modifications to policies and procedures						Recommend improvement to policies and procedures (for the region)						Understand multiple policies and procedures											
Communication													Communicate directives											Communicate vision
	Must have written and language skills						Can edit written communications; writes letters; and signs letters																	Approves items that involve the Office's policies, strategies, and directives
	Make presentations to Executives and outside																							Make presentations to BOS
	Communicates effectively with clear messages																							
	Knows how to communicate, using positive reinforcement						Has motivational skills, involving inclusion and consensus building						Uses persuasion to motivate and build commitment											
	Uses diplomacy in communications																							
People Management/ Team Building	Manage small projects						Recognize when the use of a team is appropriate						Eliminate high-order road blocks											Set objectives
	Implement results						Identify skills needed to build a team						Evaluat ethe organizational effectiveness, including its effectiveness and efficiency each year											Provide internal resources to achieve objectives (e.g., staff)
	Participate on teams						Manage teams						Manage multiple teams											Provide external resources to achieve objectives
	Guide and facilitate team efforts by setting expectations and delivering results on time						Conduct After Action Reviews (AARs)						Conduct debriefings											
	Report on team progress; evaluates teamwork and results						Monitor team progress						Provide oversight for achievement of organizational goals											



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, OFFICE OF THE ASSESSOR

DRAFT MATRIX ON JOB SKILLS FOR STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING: Executive and Management Positions

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Skill Area	Supervisory: Supervising Appraisers	On-the-Job Training (OJT)	Mentor	Internal Training	County Training	Outside Training	Section Management: Principal Assessors	On-the-Job Training (OJT)	Mentor	Internal Training	County Training	Outside Training	Senior Management: Division Chiefs, Chief Appraisers	On-the-Job Training (OJT)	Mentor	Internal Training	County Training	Outside Training	Senior Management Evaluation	Self-	Development Opportunity	Expectations Met	Mastery	Executive Team: Assessor, Acting Department Head, Chief Deputy Director, Assistant Assessors, Directors, and Administrative Deputy
Note: The Division Chiefs did not complete the matrix. The items below are examples of skill progression but require further development.																								
Ethics																								
IT/Technology	Guide staff in effective use of technology tools						Assist in the functional design of computer support						Propose areas for technology investigation											Understand the use of new technology
	Encourage staff to use existing software tools																							
Innovation	Adaptable; willing to learn																							
Attitude/ Management Style																								
Process Evaluation/ Improvements							Manage continuous process improvement effort to						Oversee design and implementation of informative											Understand management control systems, including
							Assess work processes to identify areas for						Advocate for needed process improvements and											
							Forge relationships with senior administrators in other						Review interdepartmental proposals for coordination of											Network with other County Department Directors to
Contract Management							Negotiate simple contracts						Negotiate complex contracts											Ensure divisional contracts meet BOS and
							Prepare RFPs																	
Project Management																								
Organizational Skills																								



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, OFFICE OF THE ASSESSOR
DRAFT MATRIX ON JOB SKILLS FOR STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING: Executive and Management Positions
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Human Resources Management							Evaluate staff performance						Manage fair disciplinary process Department-wide											Articulate a vision and direction to staff
							Conduct performance evaluations of staff reporting to						Conduct performance evaluations of Section Heads											Administer MAPP program with Administrators
							Build team responses to divisional issues and						Build team responses to divisional issues and											Develop and inspire staff so that they carry out the
							Identify staff strengths and weaknesses, and prepare						Identify staff strengths and weaknesses, and prepare											Balance staff development and workload needs in
													Demonstrate expert team building skills											Demonstrate leadership skills
													Advise on resolution of Personnel Issues											Work with Administrators, facilitating coordination
Staff Resources																								
Legal																								
Board Relations							Oversee staff and divisional responses to Board requests, identifying and resolving policy issues as necessary, ensuring effective and rapid response to inquiries						Respond to Board inquiries regarding Divisional reviews of Board concerns											Advise political leaders on the impact and appropriate direction of planning activities
																								Establish effective relationships with Board deputies
Assessment Appeals																								
Board Relations																								
Governmental Relations (BOE)																								
Public Relations																								
Case Management - Executive Referrals of Appraisals																								



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, OFFICE OF THE ASSESSOR

DRAFT MATRIX ON JOB SKILLS FOR STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING: Executive and Management Positions

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Skill Area	Supervisory: Supervising Appraisers	On-the-Job Training (OJT)	Mentor	Internal Training	County Training	Outside Training	Section Management: Principal Assessors	On-the-Job Training (OJT)	Mentor	Internal Training	County Training	Outside Training	Senior Management: Division Chiefs, Chief Appraisers	On-the-Job Training (OJT)	Mentor	Internal Training	County Training	Outside Training	Senior Management Evaluation	Self-	Development Opportunity	Expectations Met	Mastery	Executive Team: Assessor, Acting Department Head, Chief Deputy Director, Assistant Assessors, Directors, and Administrative Deputy
Career Rotational Experiences (Division Offices, Major Property, Etc.)																								
Education																								

Notes:

(a) At an accredited college or university.

Indicates how someone can learn the skill or ability

Indicates that on-the-job training is the only source of development or training

V Strategic Focus: Technology and Information Technology (IT)

Action Plans

Action Plan V.1: Business Solutions and Process Structure

Background

The Office of the Assessor has not until now had an organizational structure designed to identify and address business problems and solutions in an orderly and effective manner. There have been *ad hoc* groups organized around specific projects, but there has not been a carefully designed group or unit that brings together technical staff and the people charged with carrying out the day-to-day business of the Office for the purpose of identifying and pursuing ways to improve operations.

Strategies

We propose to continue and institutionalize the IT Action Planning Team as the Business Solutions Group (BSG). The BSG will consist of core staff assigned on a permanent basis, and rotating representatives of line operating groups. Members of the line staff will be accepted for membership in BSG based on demonstrated effectiveness in their work and commitment to improving overall operations. Membership will be used as a developmental opportunity to provide all members with a broad-based, strategic view of Assessor duties and activities, as well as the basic disciplines required to foster institutional change.

Expected Outcomes/Benefits

1. A variety of business issues will be addressed and resolved, using technology where appropriate and process redesign where indicated.
2. The BSG will be an incubator for a culture of positive, proactive efforts to forge both incremental and transformational changes in the way the Office of the Assessor does business.
3. The BSG will be a training ground for staff members in the areas of business process design and organizational change processes.

Goal V.1: By April 2013, Establish an ongoing BSG

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
A. Prepare a Charter for the BSG	IT Action Planning Team	Assessor ITD	3/31/13
B. Review Charter with key stakeholders	IT Action Planning Chair	Assessor ITD	4/15/13
C. Obtain approval from the Executive Team	IT Action Planning Chair	Assessor ITD	4/30/13
D. Build an Agenda for the first year's operation of the BSG	BSG	Assessor ITD Operating Units	6/30/13
E. Conduct first year of operations	BSG	Assessor ITD Operating Units	6/30/14
F. Review first year of operations for lessons learned and changes needed.	BSG	Assessor ITD Operating Units Executive Team	6/30/14
G. Build an agenda for the second year of operations	BSG	Assessor ITD Operating Units	7/31/14
H. Continue cycle of pursuing better ways of working, assessment and learning	BSG	Assessor ITD Operating Units Executive Team	6/30/15

Action Plan V.2 – Short-Term Business Solutions

Background

A number of business issues within the Office of the Assessor can be resolved relatively quickly (within 6 months) if technical and operating staff can collaborate effectively. These issues can cause intense frustration because a considerable number of staff within the Office can imagine a solution, but there is no institutional forum to foster the needed collaboration or provide priorities for competing needs. This can be an important area of activity for the BSG (see Action Plan V.1).

Strategies

The BSG will solicit business needs from both technical and operating staff members. Based on its deliberations, it will identify the most important business issues that can be resolved by process, policy or technology within 6 months, in order of importance. These short-term solutions will become part of the annual agenda and work program of the BSG.

For example, in the deliberations of the IT Action Planning Team, the need for a coordinated calendar in one of the Appeals Sections has been identified. IT staff on the team have the technical capacity to build such a calendar, and are currently in the process of doing so. Pilot testing of the calendar will be accomplished by recruiting volunteers. The Office has a number of business needs of this kind. There is much to be gained from a strategy of consistent, persistent development of needed solutions.

Three Action Planning Teams (IT, Ethics, and PACT) identified the need to update the Office's website as an important action that would reflect positively with their customers and the public's impressions of the operations. Consequently, the website update would be a logical short-term business solution to include in the first year.

Expected Outcomes/Benefits

1. Several business problems will be resolved each year. Each may be modest in its impact, but collectively they will improve significantly Office operations and foster the perception that change is possible and positive.
2. The BSG will gain skill in building business solutions and gaining acceptance for new ways of working in an environment of relatively limited risk.

Goal V.2: By September 2013, begin pilot programs for short-term business solutions

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
<i>Short-Term Business Solutions</i>			
A. Identify business needs that can be resolved within 6 months	BSG	Assessor ITD Operating Units	3/31/13
B. Prioritize needs to fit resources	BSG	Assessor ITD	4/15/13
C. Review program with the Executive Team	BSG Chair	Assessor ITD	4/30/13
D. Develop and pilot solutions for the first set of identified needs	BSG	Assessor ITD Operating Units	9/30/13
E. Develop & pilot solutions for the second set of identified needs	BSG	Assessor ITD Operating Units	6/30/14
F. Review first year of operations for lessons learned and changes needed.	BSG	Assessor ITD Operating Units Executive Team	6/30/14
G. Identify needs for the second year of operations	BSG	Assessor ITD Operating Units	7/31/14

Goal V.2: By September 2013, begin pilot programs for short-term business solutions

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
H. Continue cycle of identifying needs and developing business solutions	BSG	Assessor ITD Operating Units Executive Team	6/30/15
<i>Objective V.2.1: Conduct an Initial Short-Term Project of Updating the Assessor Website</i>			
I. Assessor Website, focusing initially on the Office of the Assessor and property tax portal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Conduct a website analysis and meet with ISD to discuss priorities for a new website or re-engineer the current website b. Request ISD to implement Google Analytics for metrics reporting on current usage c. Establish a Website Committee and set meeting dates and goals for 2013 and 2014 d. Develop roadmap, branding, content, etc. for the Website e. Design the website 	ITD	Website Committee	Begin March 2013 Completed by December 2013

Action Plan V.3 – Medium-Term Business Solutions

Background

While some business issues within the Office of the Assessor can be resolved relatively quickly, others will require more time and effort. Solutions to these issues may take as long as 18 months to understand and build. There are people in the Office of the Assessor who understand the issues, but there is a good deal of both technical and procedural investigation to be done if favorable outcomes are to be realized. At the same time, these issues are not transformational – they remain incremental improvements to overall operations. In combination, these changes may make significant improvements to operations, but they do not fundamentally change the business model of the Office.

Carefully considered decisions need to be made to identify the issues in this medium-term category, which will produce a reasonable return, especially if the Office decides to pursue transformational business solutions (see Action Plan V.4).

Strategies

The BSG will solicit business needs from both technical and operating staff members. Based on its deliberations, it will identify the most important business issues that can be resolved by process, policy, or technology in more than 6 months, but less than 18 months, in order of importance. These medium-term solutions will become part of the annual agenda and work program of the BSG.

For example, in the deliberations of the IT Action Planning Team, the possibility of building significant improvements in the current business system has been brought forward. While further investigation is needed, it appears possible that worthwhile additional functionality can be achieved without excessive time or investment. In addition, a more complete understanding of both work processes and the technology that currently supports them seems a likely outcome – one that will in all probability prove useful if the Office decides to pursue transformational solutions.

Expected Outcomes/Benefits

1. Business process issues that have slowed work for years can be resolved through this process. The full potential of existing systems can be realized, and both effectiveness and efficiency can be improved.
2. The BSG will gain skill in understanding current processes, building business solutions and gaining acceptance for new ways of working in an environment of moderate risk.
3. The BSG and Assessor ITD will have the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to manage more complex business solution projects, a necessary prerequisite to gaining consensus to build transformational systems.

Goal V.3: By June 2014, begin pilot programs for first set of medium-term business solutions

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
A. Identify business needs that require more than 6 months and less than 18 months for resolution	BSG	Assessor ITD Operating Units	3/31/13
B. Prioritize needs to fit resources	BSG	Assessor ITD	4/15/13
C. Review program with the Executive Team	BSG Chair	Assessor ITD	4/30/13
D. Develop and pilot solutions for the first set of identified needs	BSG	Assessor ITD Operating Units	@6/30/14
E. Develop and pilot solutions for the second set of identified needs	BSG	Assessor ITD Operating Units	6/30/15
F. Review first year of operations for lessons learned and changes needed.	BSG	Assessor ITD Operating Units Executive Team	6/30/14
G. Identify needs for the second year of operations, taking into account the possibility of transformational business process initiatives	BSG	Assessor ITD Operating Units	7/31/14

Action Plan V.4 – Transformational Business Solutions

Background

The most complex, high-risk business solutions an agency can undertake are transformational in nature. Transformational business solutions are not just a matter of automating existing processes. In many cases, transformational systems bring with them entirely new ways of doing business that materially change the roles of workers. They include such projects as the adoption of an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, or the operating system that has been adopted by Orange County. These initiatives fundamentally change the work processes and even the culture of an organization. They normally require 3 to 5 years of planning, systems development, pilot programs, parallel operations, and finally adoption.

In some cases, the nature of these systems does not easily allow for phased implementation and, if they must be implemented in a “cut-over,” there is a high risk that must be managed with care and skill. It is wise to confidently expect significant operating disruptions during and immediately after cut-over. At the same time, the benefits of adopting such new ways of working can be exponential. Major improvements in accuracy, transparency, and efficiency are available.

The Office has been considering the possibility of developing such a system for some time, and has attempted to start them on several occasions. These attempts are still underway, although progress has so far been less than dramatic. There is concern that project management capabilities within the Office may not be equal to this complex task, which requires a conceptual understanding of both the business processes and the data architecture that supports that process. Put simply, this is very hard to do.

Strategies

The BSG will evaluate current candidates for a transformational system, and develop a project planning and management framework to guide the effort. The BSG will ensure that operating units are kept abreast of the functional development of the systems, and that operating staff are intimately involved in systems development. BSG will also serve as a communications link to keep Assessor ITD in touch with the rest of the organization, so that all parties concerned understand where the effort stands, what its likely timelines will be, and its projected effect on the Office. Finally, BSG will ensure that whatever system is selected has been thoroughly reviewed by key stakeholders, and that their recommendations for changes have been adequately considered.

Expected Outcomes/Benefits

Major improvements in accuracy, transparency, ease of access to information, and work flow efficiency.

Goal V.4: By June 2015, pilot a transformational business solution for the LA County Assessor

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
A. Identify institutional resources required to implement transformational systems	BSG	Assessor ITD Operating Units	3/31/13
B. Identify candidate systems	BSG	Assessor ITD	3/15/13
C. Interactively build internal resources while selecting candidate systems (the two affect each other)	Assessor ITD	BSG	9/30/13
D. Build a project management organization and process	Assessor ITD	Assessor Executive Management	6/30/14
E. Develop & pilot a transformational solution; provide potential users with previews of the system to obtain feedback for further development.	Assessor ITD	BSG	6/30/15
F. Based on the pilot program, assess and address the likely changes to work process and human resources systems.	BSG	Assessor ITD Operating Units	9/30/14
G. Build an implementation plan; review the plan with key stakeholders; make changes as needed; establish feedback links and review processes to make changes identified as implementation proceeds.	BSG	Assessor ITD Operating Units Assessor Executive Management	3/31/15
H. Execute transformational system implementation	Assessor ITD	BSG Operating Units	9/30/15
I. Continue review and modification as users gain familiarity with the system, find flaws, and find new possibilities for its capability.	BSG	Assessor ITD	Ongoing

Action Plan V.5 – Managing Referrals and Cases for Appraisal Reviews

Several Action Planning Teams (APTs) (Ethics, PACT, and IT) identified the need for process improvements in case management, emphasizing the need for better coordination of special requests and Executive Referrals. This Action Plan outlines an integrated approach, based on these APTs' suggestions.

Executive Referrals

The Executive Office receives inquiries from a myriad of sources:

- Board of Supervisors
- County inter-departmental case referrals (e.g., TTC, Auditor-Controller, etc.)
- Inter-governmental case referrals (BOE, Cities, State, and Federal agencies)
- Taxpayer /Tax Agents

We need to review and improve our process for handling Executive Referrals – (formerly known as “10-Day Pink Specials”), and other outside requests.

Case Management Systems

Currently, we use three different types of systems or spreadsheets to track referrals: Assessor Public Service (APS), AS400, and the Chief Deputy Log. APS has limitations, and the other two systems are restricted in usage. In addition, some information is kept in Excel on individual computers. Therefore, the Office cannot share information or track case status readily.

For the protection of our employees, we need one system accessible to the entire Office that will provide more transparency and better coordination of requests, referrals, and correspondence. There are a number of vendors, who provide CRM software, including:

- VOICE (out-of-the-box solution): <https://www.symplicity.com/voice>
- Microsoft Dynamics (Outlook-based but may have a government version):
 - <http://www.microsoft.com/industry/government/products/dynamics/CRM/2011/default.aspx>
 - <http://crmdynamics.blob.core.windows.net/docs/>
- Microsoft_Dynamics_CRM_State_Local_Government_Data_Sheet.pdf
- Oracle PeopleSoft Enterprise Service Solution: <http://www.oracle.com/us/media1/057246.pdf>
- Monarch Constituent Management (used by State Legislative office for constituent management): http://monarch-cms.com/Monrch_Brochure.pdf
- Salesforce (web-based and needs to be customized): <http://www.salesforce.com/solutions/public-sector/>
- Sage Act (web-based and needs to be customized): <http://na.sage.com/sage-act/products>
- Goldmine (used by BOS and the Office of the CEO and needs to be customized): <http://www.goldmine.com/>

Goal 5: By June 2014, improve the case intake and management process with increased transparency and improved tracking of case status

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
<p>A. Design and flowchart the new process. The objective is to have one case management system accessible to all staff (see next Action Step). Process improvements should focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Better coordination of special requests and Executive Referrals b. Identifying the responsibilities of the Special Assistants, Special Investigations, and the Divisions in regards to: c. Case intake and case management d. Delegation of cases e. Method of communication with taxpayer (letter, telephone, email) 	ITD	ITD	March 2014
<p>B. Review other government agencies' tracking systems. (Note: See list under "Strategies" for "Executive Referrals" as a starting point.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Note: ISD's CRM staff members indicate that the costs for CRM licenses with Microsoft range from \$500 to \$1,000 per user. b. Depending on the number of Assessor employees who will be using this application, it may prove to be more beneficial to develop this capability via .Net, according to ISD. 	ITD/ISD	Special Assistants and Division Chiefs involved with Executive Referrals	March 2014
<p>C. Obtain funding to purchase and implement an off-the-shelf, single system for case management and Executive Referrals that will be used by the entire Office and will allow tracking, statistical reporting, and improved workflow; ensure funding is available to train staff on the new system</p>	Acting Department Head		June 2014
<p>D. Implement the case management system; adjust the flowchart to reflect the new case management system</p>	ITD/ISD		December 2014

Goal 5: By June 2014, improve the case intake and management process with increased transparency and improved tracking of case status

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
E. Train staff on the new case management system	ITD/ISD	Special Assistants, Division Chiefs, and Staff involved with Executive Referrals	January through March 2015
F. Develop a process using the new case management system when asked to revisit an issue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Query the system. The system will track and maintain the history of cases, eliminating the need to start from scratch or open up a new investigation. b. If there is a subsequent request on the same issue and <u>circumstances have not changed</u>, send appropriate form letter explaining that the issue was reviewed and addressed on (give date) and inform them of appropriate appeal process. Document response in the case management system 	Special Assistants and Division Chiefs involved with Executive Referrals	ITD/ISD	December 2014
G. Educate the Board Offices and others about the new case management process and system. All inquiries from the BOS or other government agencies will be directed to the Special Assistants and/or Property Owner Advocate	Special Assistants Involved with Executive Referrals	Division Chiefs involved with Executive Referrals	January through March 2015

VI Strategic Focus: Public Affairs & Communications Team (PACT)

Charter and Focus

Background

Historically the Office has approached public affairs in an *ad hoc* manner, lacking a cohesive strategy and vision. As a result, some critical functions were neglected or reactionary.

Since July 2012, the number of Special Assistants in the Executive Office has declined from 8 to 6. The current public affairs and communications functions are assigned to different Special Assistants, but are informally coordinated. Their roles have been fragmented further as a result of recent turmoil and controversies.

The Office would benefit in:

- Incorporating a comprehensive and integrated public affairs and communications strategy as part of the strategic planning process
- A proactive approach to public affairs and communications

Role of Public Affairs and Communications

Public Affairs develops and maintains positive relationships with employees and external stakeholders that reflect the organization's vision, mission, values, and policies.

A professionally organized Public Affairs unit is useful to an organization's strategic process to monitor its business environment, identify potential threats and opportunities, evaluate and advise on issues, influence public policy, build a solid reputation, establish and maintain positive relationships, and communicate to the public.

As a public agency, the Office of the Assessor can benefit from a disciplined and integrated Public Affairs & Communications Team (PACT) for preparing the Office's messages for internal and external audiences. The PACT can also assist the Office in "branding" itself by:

- Conveying the Office's core values
- Communicating the primary services provided
- Educating the public
- Delivering public service
- Addressing taxpayers' or their representatives' questions on specific cases
- Establishing strategies, priorities, and tactics regarding communication messages

Strategies Overview

The proposed PACT has prepared the following Action Plans:

- Action Plan VI.1: Create a professional Public Affairs & Communications Team (PACT)
- Action Plan VI.2: Support the implementation of the Strategic Plan and respond specifically to other APT's outlined initiatives for the PACT
- Action Plan VI.3: Improve Internal and External Public Awareness, Trust, and Understanding of the Office regarding its Mission, Goals, Services, and Accomplishments.

Action Plans

Action Plan VI.1: Create a professional Public Affairs & Communications Team (PACT)

Background

The Office of the Assessor represents more than 9 million individuals in the County and maintains a property roll of 2.4 million homes and businesses with a valuation of more than \$1.1 trillion. Yet, the Office has not established clear public affairs and communications plans, budgets, or systems. Communications operates in a vacuum. The Special Assistants' assignments tend to be reactionary to the needs of the Office on a case-by-case basis.

Moreover, the Office lacks continuity and consistency in communicating who we are and what we do because of personnel or administration changes. For outreach to be most effective, the Office must centralize its outreach efforts under one program. This programmatic approach would ensure the Office is perceived as a reliable source of information. Maintaining public trust and support while responding to public needs and concerns would become an integral part of the outreach program.

Perception is reality – whether grounded in truth or perceived events. Therefore, each employee projects an image of who we are... the nature of our work. A strong and positive message can affect dramatically how others perceive the Office and the employees who work here. Employees need to talk about the good job they do, manage taxpayers' expectations, and keep a positive light on the assessment function.

Strategies

The strategy is to create an integrated and professional PACT with clearly defined leadership.

Vision and Motto

The PACT will help restore the Office of the Assessor's image (and self-image), which in turn will help the Office achieve its vision to be the premier assessor's office in the nation.

The PACT will emphasize **valuing our community**, which is parallel to the Office's motto, "**Valuing People and Property**" and reflects the Office's dedication to the County and the communities we serve.

Mission

The PACT is dedicated to providing a comprehensive program that includes media and external affairs, internal communications, inter-governmental and legislative affairs, and community affairs and case advocacy.

It is committed to engaging with the public and County staff while communicating the core values and goals of the Office. PACT will accomplish its mission by:

- Addressing the public's requests to facilitate grievances and concerns by providing assistance and seeking resolution
- Educating and informing the public to bring an awareness and understanding of the Office
- Promoting the Office's pride, unity, and leadership by informing employees, encouraging active involvement, and facilitating conversations
- Serving as the primary point of contact for news media and distributing Office information that is timely, accurate, and complete
- Providing positive intergovernmental relations and advocating the Office's position on public policy and legislation
- Advising the Assessor and other Office executives on public affairs issues

Assigned Functions

The PACT would provide the following services:

- **Inter-Governmental & Legislative Affairs.** An effective Inter-Governmental & Legislative Affairs program supports the vision of the Office by maintaining cooperative relationships and partnerships with other County and external government agencies through public policy that supports the work and mission of the Office. The Special Assistant for Inter-Governmental & Legislative Affairs supports the Office by:
 - Monitoring, analyzing, and developing public policy and legislation at the local, State, and Federal levels
 - Keeping Office executives informed by proposing strategies, policy positions, and legislative recommendations

PACT Vision:
Assist the Office of the Assessor in achieving its vision to be the premier assessor's office in the nation

PACT Mission:
*Support the Office of the Assessor in **valuing people, property, and our community** by engaging and connecting with the public, our employees, all levels of government, and news media by communicating the Office's goals, objectives, priorities, and policies.*

Through the development and maintenance of a network of other government agencies, the Special Assistant for Inter-Governmental & Legislative Affairs will help promote the programs and services available to members of the public, and establish a communications vehicle for public agencies and the public to obtain information and services from the Office.

The Inter-Governmental & Legislative Affairs program will help ensure that the needs and priorities of the Office on matters of budget, policy, regulation, etc. receive appropriate attention by legislators, the Board of Supervisors, Board of Equalization, and other regulators.

- **Community Relations and Public Education.** The Assessor's Office has routinely conducted outreach in some form; however, efforts were not unified and were administered on an *ad hoc* basis to meet the needs of individual programs. This decentralized and scattered approach to outreach does not engender public understanding of who we are and what we do. Furthermore, it lacks consistency when personnel or administration changes occur.

Outreach is defined as two-way communication between an agency and the public to establish and foster mutual understanding and promote public involvement with the goal of improving communications. Such two-way communications will increase the level of trust and assist the various communities we serve. Instituting this interactive connection with the public provides a reciprocal benefit that is essential to accomplishing the Office's mission.

- **Media and External Communications.** The Office normally exchanges information and messages between the Office and other organizations, groups, or individuals outside of our formal structure. Goals of external communication include facilitating cooperation with groups to present a favorable image of the Office and promoting our services to the public. A variety of channels may be used for external communication, including face-to-face meetings, print literature, news media, and electronic communication technologies, such as the Internet.

The PACT oversees all printed materials that are released to the public to make sure that the branding and written content of the materials are consistent.

Media relations are an important aspect in the realization of the Office's goals. The PACT will interact with the media to provide open, honest, and timely information about the Office while communicating its vision, goals, and objectives.

The PACT could also coordinate all electronic communications on the Internet, including but not limited to our website, emails, and social media. Using electronic communications will provide the public an avenue to get timely information about the Office. In addition, the PACT could incorporate strategies to increase two-way communications between the Office and the public on all electronic communication channels.

- **Internal Communications.** Employees who are better informed are more satisfied, feel more involved in the organization, and ultimately contribute more to its success. Internal communication focuses on supporting the Executive Team's policy priorities and initiatives through consistent and clearly communicated messaging and materials directed toward

managers and employees. Internal communications supports broader organizational initiatives by facilitating multi-level dialogues within the organization and by soliciting and measuring feedback from internal audiences. At its base, internal communications focuses on engaging and educating employees while helping to build a sense of pride and unity.

- **Property Owners' Advocate and Case Management.** The position of the Property Owners' Advocate was created to resolve unusual problems facing homeowners and small businesses. The Property Owner's Advocates receives case inquiries from the public, including referrals from the Board of Supervisors (BOS), the Board of Equalization (BOE), the Tax Collector's Office, the Auditor-Controllers' Office, Assessor employees, and the Assessment Appeal Board (AAB), as well as direct inquiries to the Assessor's Executive Office.

The Advocate's role is to demonstrate an impartial determination, find solutions, adhere to tax laws, protect taxpayer's rights, and confirm the fairness of the process and decisions. Often, the situation revolves around listening to the taxpayer's concerns, analyzing the situation, and directing them to the appropriate division with the jurisdiction and specialization pertaining to their specific assessment issue. Assistance is provided to navigate the taxpayer through what can sometimes feel like a complex bureaucracy. Ultimately, it is a matter of making sure the property owner understands why a conclusion was reached and that the taxpayer's concerns were considered and addressed.

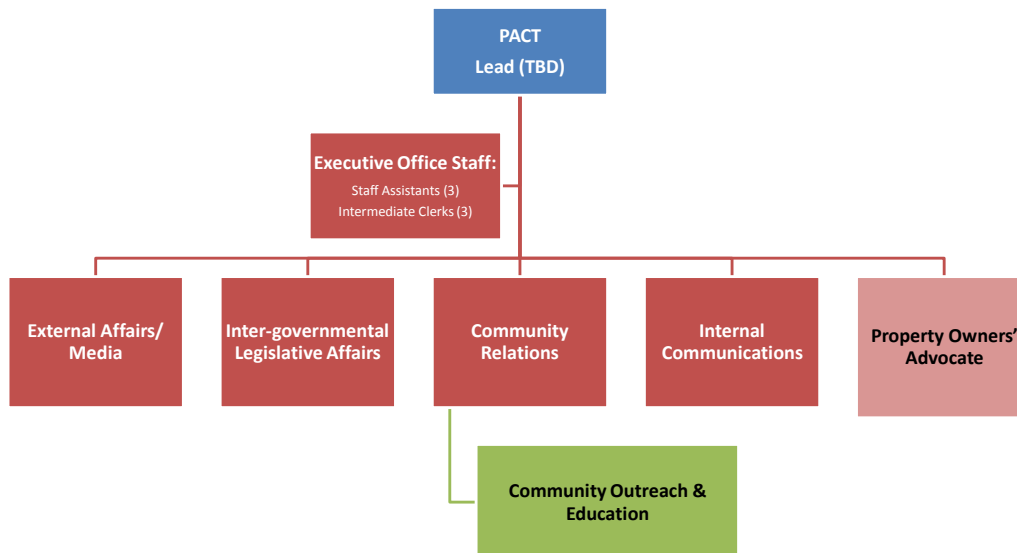
Structure

The organizational chart is an example of what the structure might look like for the next two years. We recommend the following changes within our current staffing configuration:

- The Executive Leadership should assign one of the existing Special Assistants to be the "Lead" over the PACT and manage the coordination across functions. The assigned Lead would also perform the PACT duties assigned to him or her.
- The Property Owners Advocate function should be a direct report to the Lead.
- Because one of the Special Assistant positions is currently vacant (Legislative Affairs), the Executive leadership should consolidate the legislative affairs functions with the Special Assistant over Inter-governmental Relations. The Special Assistant for Inter-Governmental & Legislative Affairs should use Legal Services as a resource in the analysis of policy and legislation.
- The Assessor's or Chief Deputy Assessor's Executive Secretary should take the lead in allocating work assignments and administrative related duties for the Executive Office's support staff.

Although areas of specialization are individually assigned, all will continue to work as a team.

Proposed PACT Structure



Resource Reallocation

In the near term, the PACT “Lead” should report directly to the Chief Deputy Assessor. When an elected Assessor is in place, that individual can determine whether the reporting relationship should remain with the Chief Deputy Assessor or be re-assigned to the Assessor or someone else.

Case Management Staffing

The case workload of the Property Owners’ Advocate position has increased during the last few years, based on an informal case log maintained on an Excel worksheet developed for the Chief Deputy’s secretary to keep track of cases assigned to Special Assistants. The informal case log has also been useful for the Property Owners’ Advocate to track assignments and taxpayer inquiries. The log contains the taxpayer’s name, Assessor Identification Number, where a case review request has been assigned, case resolution date, etc.

The trends in the increased workload entail:

- The number of cases referred to the Office of the Assessor increased significantly in 2011 and has maintained a constant high rate into 2012.
- The number of total cases logged has increased by 219% since 2008.

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- The percentage of cases assigned to the Property Owners' Advocate has increased from 52% in 2008 to 67% in 2012.
- The number of those cases assigned to the Property Owners' Advocate has increased even more dramatically – from 140 cases in 2008 to 394 cases in 2012; this trend represents an increased caseload of:
 - 281% since 2008
 - 67% over last year's case load (2011)

Case Workload	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012 (Est.) ¹	Percent Change (5-Year)	Average Annual Cases
Total Cases Logged	268	342	280	643	586		424
Percent Change Year-to-Year	100%	128%	82%	230%	91%	219%	
Assigned to the Property Owners' Advocate	140	192	189	376	394		258
Percent Change Year-to-Year	100%	137%	98%	199%	105%	281%	
Percentage of All Cases	52%	56%	68%	58%	67%	61%	

Note: The workload displayed may be understated because not all Special Assistants may log in all of the cases that they have reviewed. In addition, cases that do not require follow-up are usually not logged in.

Given the increased casework, we recommend using the funds from the vacant Special Assistant position for **a skilled appraiser** with the technical expertise to assist the Property Owners' Advocate, answer taxpayer questions, follow up on cases, and exercise the authority to resolve cases and sign decision letters. This position should be viewed as a career development opportunity and a rotational assignment (e.g., two or three years). The incumbent could also perform special assignments for the Assistant Assessors and the Special Assistants as needed.

Coupled with this resource reallocation is the need to establish tighter criteria for setting priorities, allocating cases, and assigning special projects. In addition, the Office requires an integrated case management system, as also proposed by the Action Planning Team (APT) on Ethics and outlined in the IT Action Plan V.5.

¹ Actuals for 2012 through November 30, 2012, are 537 total cases logged and 361 cases assigned to the Property Owners' Advocate (67%).

In the event that the State Legislature's stance on split roll or some other high-profile assessment policy emerges, the Office may have a more compelling need to fill the Special Assistant, Legislative Affairs, position. The PACT will monitor the situation and alert the Executive Team if additional attention is warranted.

Expected Outcomes/Benefits

Whether we like it or not, the Office has an image based on everything people see and hear about the organization. The media plays an important part in portraying our image, but our image is also molded by small acts – how our phones are answered, how staff present themselves, how our materials look, and how our website works. A positive image is important for building public trust; and shaping the public's image of the Office can begin with each interaction— ***one taxpayer at a time.***

Benefits of a professional PACT function are:

- Improved image, a better informed public, awareness of accomplishments and changes to date
- Better internal communications, improved morale with better informed employees
- Clearer roles, functions, and expectations for the PACT
- Greater consistency across the Special Assistants
- Greater consistency in the communications of policies
- Establishment of a professional and defined structure with institutional memory that can continue regardless of who is the future leadership
- More proactive communication
- Greater responsiveness during crises or unanticipated events
- Restored trust and confidence in the Office with members of the Board of Supervisors, County agencies, and other local, State, and Federal government agencies through an Inter-Governmental & Legislative program by:
 - Communicating the reform and planning efforts enacted by the Office since July 2012
 - Proposing further reforms designed to increase transparency and efficiency in the Office and within the profession of public assessment

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Specifically, the goals of the Property Owners' Advocate are to:

- Create a flow chart outlining the Executive Office case referral history, starting from intake of a case, through its assignment, tracking, and resolution
- Create an Executive Referral case-intake sheet
- Meet with Board of Supervisor (BOS) Deputies to discuss a defined and structured referral process
- Improve the case intake and management process with increased transparency and tracking of case status
- Collaborate with the IT Action Plan V.5 initiative, involving the acquisition and integration of a Public Service Tracking System. This would include the integration of Executive Office taxpayer referrals

Goal VI.1: Enhance the Office of the Assessor's Public Affairs & Communications Team (PACT) capability and professionalism

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
<i>Objective VI.1.1: By March 2013, formally create a professional Public Affairs & Communications Team (PACT).</i>			
A. Draft vision and mission statements for a refined and new Public Affairs & Communications Team (PACT)	Special Assistants	PACT	In Progress; see draft in this Action Plan
B. Refine and approve the PACT mission statement	Executive Team	PACT	January 2013
C. Review, refine, and approve a new PACT organizational structure with a clearly identified "Lead" overseeing all of the functions; prepare an organizational chart to display the new structure; core functions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Inter-governmental relations and legislative affairs b. Community relations and public education c. External communications and the media d. Internal communications e. Taxpayer advocate and case management (see IT Action Plan V.5) 	Executive Team	PACT	January 2013; see draft organizational chart in this Action Plan

Goal VI.1: Enhance the Office of the Assessor's Public Affairs & Communications Team (PACT) capability and professionalism

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
D. Establish PACT goals, building on the objectives outlined in these Action Plans and Action Plans developed by other APTs	Chief Deputy Assessor	PACT	February 2013
E. Define job assignments, outlining roles and responsibilities within the PACT; update Special Assistant job descriptions	PACT		February 2013
F. Communicate within the Office of the Assessor the roles and responsibilities of PACT	Chief Deputy Assessor	PACT, Internal Communications	March 2013
G. Develop a PACT manual regarding policies that employees' need to know about via refresher training (e.g., gift policies, writing, aggressive constituents, accounting procedures)	PACT		TBD 2014
H. Identify PACT training needs (e.g., communication risk factors or case management); implement a training program to address these needs	PACT Lead		TBD 2014
I. Develop a budget, based on the approved Action Steps in this Strategic Plan	PACT, Lead	PACT	March 2013
J. Seek approval of the PACT budget	PACT, Lead, Executive Team	PACT	July 2013
K. Based on budget outcomes from the prior year, prepare a two-year budget for review, refinement, and Executive approval		PACT	March 2013
L. Review and update the budget annually with at least a two-year forecast		PACT	March 2014; annually thereafter

Action Plan VI.2: Support the implementation of the Strategic Plan and respond specifically to other APT's outlined initiatives for the PACT

Strategies

The roll-out strategies consists of two initiatives:

- Roll-out the Strategic Plan internally to employees
- Roll-out the Strategic Plan externally with stakeholders

In addition, other Action Planning Teams (APTs) have identified specific initiatives where they want our assistance, including:

- APT-Ethics, Action Plan 1.2: Enhance case management (IT Action Plan V.5)
- APT-Ethics, Action Plan 1.4: Restore public trust
- APT-Cultural Change, Action Plan 1: Improve, formalize, and standardize internal communication (e.g., new hires, organizational changes, etc.) and customer service
- APT-Cultural Change, Action Plan 3: Develop and formalize an Office morale program (Note: Human Resources, Lead; Internal Communications, Support)

Goal VI.2: Support Strategic Plan Initiatives

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
<i>Objective VI.2.1: By December 2013, improve employees' knowledge of the Strategic Plan, based on 10-point scale with an overall average rating of 7 or higher.</i>			
A. Develop a roll-out internal communications strategy – in coordination with the external communications strategy – of best channels of communications (e.g., informal forums, newsletters, posters), depending on message and target audience	Special Assistant	PACT Team members	February 2013
B. Obtain Executive Team approval of the roll-out communication strategy	Executive Team	PACT, Anthony Crump	February 2013
C. Prepare collateral message and materials regarding the content of the Strategic Plan	Special Assistant	PACT Team members	February 2013
D. Train the Executive Team and Division Chiefs on the roll-out communication strategy and provide them with tools and techniques to get the message across	Special Assistant	PACT Team members	March 2013
E. Prepare ongoing updates of progress and accomplishments vis-à-vis the Action Plans	Special Assistant	PACT Team members	Quarterly

Goal VI.2: Support Strategic Plan Initiatives

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
F. Monitor the impact of the communication tactics in terms of effectiveness via surveys and focus groups; modify as needed	PACT, Special Assistant, Internal Communications	PACT Team members	Monthly; ongoing

Objective VI.2.2: By December 2014, improve the public's perceptions of the Office by 10%, based on an independent survey results conducted in 2013 and 2014.

A. Develop a roll-out external communications strategy – in coordination with the internal communications strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Media b. Inter-governmental and legislative c. Community relations d. Social media <p>Outline best means of communication (channels of communications (e.g., community meetings, media, newsletters, posters, receptions, gala receptions, social media/Internet, website), depending on message and target audience</p>	Special Assistant	PACT Team members	February 2013
B. Obtain Executive Team approval of the roll-out communication strategy	Executive Team	PACT Team members	February 2013
C. Prepare collateral messages, press packet, fact sheets, posters, and materials regarding the content of the Strategic Plan – in collaboration with materials developed for internal communication (see above)	Special Assistant	PACT Team members	February 2013
D. Develop a Speakers' Bureau by topic for the Strategic Plan; train on presentation skills and techniques for managing events	Special Assistant	PACT Team members	February 2013
E. Train the Executive Team, Division Chiefs, and involved Appraiser staff on the roll-out communication strategy and provide them with tools and techniques to get the message across (coordinate with internal communication strategy training, cited above)	Special Assistant	PACT Team members	February 2013

Goal VI.2: Support Strategic Plan Initiatives

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
<p>F. Survey the public regarding their perceptions of the entire Office of the Assessor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design the survey and distribution plan Review with the Divisions and refine as needed Review with the Executive Team; refine and obtain approval Conduct the survey Analyze survey results 	Special Assistant	PACT Team members	June 2013
G. Prepare ongoing updates of progress and accomplishments vis-à-vis the Action Plans	Special Assistant	PACT Team members	Quarterly
H. Monitor the impact of the communication tactics in terms of effectiveness via surveys, community meetings, and focus groups; modify as needed	Special Assistant	PACT Team members	Monthly; ongoing
I. Re-survey the public regarding their perceptions of the Office; compare survey results with prior survey results (apply similar Action Steps as conducted in the first public survey)	Special Assistant	PACT Team members	September 2014

Action Plan VI.3: Improve Internal and External Public Awareness, Trust, and Understanding of the Office of the Assessor Regarding its Mission, Goals, Services, and Accomplishments.

Background

An effective program of taxpayer service activities is a critical objective for the Office of the Assessor because of the general complexity of tax laws and the large number of taxpayers served. Therefore, the Office must set and deliver a high standard of services for taxpayers and their representatives. Such high-service standards will result in high ratings of customer service satisfaction.

Strategies

Since July 2012, the Executive Team's initial focus had to be on internal changes to ensure smooth, ethical, efficient, and professional operations, as outlined in the "100-Day Report" to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). During the next calendar year, the Office needs to:

- Continue communicating internally with employees so they understand the changes taking place
- Start focusing on re-building its external relationships and restoring the public trust

Among our key constituents are:

- Business Organizations
- Civic/Service Groups (Kiwanis clubs, rotary clubs, chambers, realtors, etc.)
- Elected Officials and government agencies
- Employees
- Media
- Taxpayer Groups (senior citizens, veterans, property owners, etc.)

The PACT functions serve an important role in helping the Office to communicate internally and externally, working with community groups, educating the public, tracking legislature, and interfacing with the public. During the next two years, given the current circumstances, media attention, investigations, and pending changes, the PACT can assist the Office in important ways. Therefore, the proposed PACT has outlined two-year initiatives for its core functions.

The distinctions among media, internal communications, and external relations are blending in today's high-tech world. Therefore, the PACT efforts must be coordinated to ensure a consistent branding of the Office and assurance that the communication tools used to reach the public are cost-effective and appropriate; some of the tools involve:

- Design displays
- Develop presentations
- Create Public Service Announcements (PSAs)
- Develop factsheets
- Produce posters
- Create informational folders
- Assemble media/press packets
- Create brochures
- Develop tip sheets and talking points
- Produce an educational homepage
- Produce videos

Expected Benefits

The public affairs and outreach strategy is intended to ensure the Office is:

- Building relationships with its partners
- Providing timely and accurate information to the public
- Maintaining a clear and consistent message
- Increasing awareness and visibility of who we are, what we do, and how our Office benefits the community

Goal VI.3: Develop Specific Two-year Action Plan Initiatives for Each of the PACT Functions

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
PACT OVERALL			
<i>Objective VI.3.1: Each July, develop a Public Affairs Master Plan</i>			
A. Build a communications calendar, incorporating the outcomes from this Strategic Plan and Action Plans	PACT, Lead	PACT	March 2013
B. Update the communications calendar for the fiscal year	PACT, Lead	PACT	July 2013
C. Update the communications calendar for the fiscal year, based on the prior year's experiences	PACT, Lead	PACT	July 2014
D. Prepare a PACT Master Plan for the next two years, coinciding with the new administration	PACT, Lead	PACT	March 2015
E. Update the PACT Master Plan each year, based on the prior year's experiences	PACT, Lead	PACT	July 2016; Each July Thereafter
PUBLIC EDUCATION AND OUTREACH			
<i>Objective VI.3.2: Re-engage key stakeholders and, by June 2014, complete four public education and outreach programs on specific issues.</i>			
A. Formalize the Speakers' Bureau with subject matter experts identified; train identified Assessor staff to participate in the Speakers' Bureau (See Action Plan VI.2)	Special Assistants	PACT	March 2013
B. 571 L BUSINESS PROPERTY STATEMENTS. Working in close collaboration with the South District, create and execute a public outreach project that will annually support this need	Special Assistants	Region, South District	In Progress; February 24, 2013; and annually each March thereafter
C. OFFICE OF THE ASSESSOR OVERVIEW. Create and execute a public education project that will explain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The mission and work performed b. Reforms to date c. Strategic directions d. Respond to special requests for presentations 	Special Assistants	PACT, Speakers' Bureau	Designed by March 2013; roll out in April, averaging 4 per month

Goal VI.3: Develop Specific Two-year Action Plan Initiatives for Each of the PACT Functions

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
D. SENIOR CITIZENS/VETERANS EXEMPTIONS. Create and execute a public education project that will explain the need for related exemptions, notices, and transfers	Special Assistants	PACT	August 31, 2013; offered every September and October
E. EXEMPTIONS FOR OTHER STAKEHOLDERS. Create and execute a public education project that will explain the need for related exemptions, notices, and transfers	Special Assistants	PACT	August 2014
F. INSTITUTIONAL EXEMPTIONS (e.g., religious institutions, schools, hospitals). Create and execute a public education project that will explain the need for related exemptions, notices, and transfers	Special Assistants	PACT	April 2014
G. CONSUMER AFFAIRS FRAUD. Participate in 15 workshops (3 per BOS) each year.	Consumer Affairs	PACT	15 per year
H. COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUPS. Re-evaluate membership and re-convene the four Community Advisory Groups: Realtors, Escrow and Title, Community representatives, and Tax Advisors.	Special Assistants	PACT	April 2013; meet quarterly in Year 1; meet a minimum of biannually thereafter, unless critical issue arises

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Objective VI.3.3: Support the Executive Team's policy priorities and initiatives through consistent and clearly communicated messaging and materials directed towards managers and employees by:

- Communicating and supporting Strategic Plan initiatives*
- Developing an office communication plan*
- Producing and distributing The Valuator*
- Updating the emergency communications plan*
- Enhancing the integration of new hires into the organization*
- Soliciting employee feedback and ideas*
- Providing progress reports and updates on management initiatives and priorities*
- Developing and disseminating the Annual Report*

Goal VI.3: Develop Specific Two-year Action Plan Initiatives for Each of the PACT Functions

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
A. Support Strategic Plan Initiatives: a. Internal Communications Plan b. Strategic Plan roll-out strategy for employees i. Roll-out communications plan ii. Communication Support Team (CST) iii. Progress updates, feedback and monitoring c. Office Morale Program d. Staff Advocate	Special Assistant	APT-Culture CST	March 2013 - Ongoing
B. THE <u>VALUATOR</u> . Produce and distribute 6 bi-monthly issues and 1 holiday issue of the <u>Valuator</u> to all employees and retired personnel; design a “re-branded” <u>Valuator</u> with an online HTML version	Special Assistant	APT-Culture	In Progress
C. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION PLAN. a. Develop an internal communication plan, building on the Action Plan work of the APT-Culture Change. b. Create a staff training manual for Executive Office staff that provides an overview of rules and regulations of an elected office from the County and State FPPC viewpoint	Special Assistant Special Assistant	 PACT	June 2013 June 2014
D. EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION PLAN. Ensure the plan is up-to-date and communicate its content throughout the Office	Administration Deputy	Special Assistants	July 2013
E. NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION. Design a new employee orientation program, covering human resources, public relations, the Office’s mission and structure, organizational values and ethics, etc.	Administration Deputy	PACT	December 2013
F. ONBOARDING. Design and implement an onboarding program for new managers and up; create an Assessor manual for future administrations	Administration Deputy	PACT	June 2014
G. ANNUAL REPORT. Retool and design an annual report that describes the Office’s transformation in the last year; use the document as both a public affairs and internal communications document	Special Assistants	PACT, Ad Hoc Annual Report Committee	August 2013, each August thereafter

Goal VI.3: Develop Specific Two-year Action Plan Initiatives for Each of the PACT Functions

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
INTER-GOVERNMENTAL AND LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS			
<i>Objective VI.3.4: Re-establish and improve cooperative relationships and partnerships with other County and external government agencies. Re-institute sharing of information with the Board of Supervisors, other governmental agencies, cities, and school districts. Monitor State legislation.</i>			
A. BOARD OF SUPERVISORS. Meet with Board Deputies regarding such updates as: a. Forecast b. Strategic Plan c. Case management d. Annual Assessment Roll e. Etc.	Executive Staff	Inter-government Affairs	Starting March 2013; Quarterly in Year 1; semi-annually thereafter
B. STATE LEGISLATION. Monitor and analyze pending State legislation (e.g., split roll) that can affect the Office; meet with State Legislators to maintain relationships and share information about the Office's activities	Special Assistant	PACT	In Progress; Ongoing
C. INTER-GOVERNMENTAL COMMUNICATIONS (e.g., schools, cities, association, etc.). Develop and maintain a database of key governmental contacts; conduct briefings as requested as part of community outreach	Special Assistant		In Progress; ongoing
MEDIA AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS			
<i>Objective VI.3.5: Present a favorable image of the Office and our services to the public, using a variety of channels including print literature, news media, and electronic communication.</i> a. <i>By December 2013, improve the website to focus on providing greater public service, easier access to information, and increase stakeholder feedback.</i> b. <i>By March 2013, increase the Office's capacity to monitor, engage, and interact with news media</i> c. <i>Each July, develop and execute a plan to communicate the closing of the Assessment Roll.</i>			
A. Assessor Website: See IT Action Plan V.2			See IT Action Plan V.2
B. ANNUAL ASSESSMENT ROLL. Execute and communicate the closing of the Assessment Roll, including notifying other government entities of their respective Assessment Roll value	IT Project Management,	Special Assistants	July 2013, each July thereafter

Goal VI.3: Develop Specific Two-year Action Plan Initiatives for Each of the PACT Functions

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
<p>C. OFFICE MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY. Review, update, and create policies and procedures relating to news media and external/internal communications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Read existing policies b. Make recommendations to update or adopt new Office policies for the Executive Team c. Adopt updated or new Office policies d. Implement new policies and procedures e. Alert affected employees of the policy and procedural changes 	Special Assistant		February 2013
<p>D. MEDIA MONITORING.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide daily media clippings b. Prepare monthly metric reports on traditional media and social media c. Implement media monitoring platform and news issues metrics, reporting on media that affect the Office 	Special Assistant		March 2013; ongoing thereafter
<p>E. MEDIA RELATIONS AND CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Engage reporters covering government and real estate in the LA market b. Schedule meetings with the top 10 editors or boards of newspapers, covering Office events c. In conjunction with the Speakers' Bureau outlined in this Action Plan, train identified Office spokespersons and technical experts on media relations, interview techniques, and public speaking d. Create a communications plan that includes procedures and crises communications tactics; train key staff on subject (Note: This is different than the Emergency Communications Plan described earlier.) 	<p>Special Assistant</p> <p>Special Assistant</p> <p>Special Assistant</p> <p>Special Assistant</p>	PACT	<p>September 2013</p> <p>December 2013</p> <p>June 2013</p> <p>June 2013</p>

Goal VI.3: Develop Specific Two-year Action Plan Initiatives for Each of the PACT Functions

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
<p>F. SOCIAL MEDIA. Use social media to monitor and engage with stakeholders of issues regarding the Office</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Create an email distribution list for the Office ■ Brand current social media profiles and create a platform that interconnects with website to capture data. ■ Acquire social media monitoring and management platform for timely response and reporting 	Special Assistant	PACT	<p>Begin March 2013</p> <p>July 2014</p>
<p>G. DECLINE-IN-VALUE. Create and execute external communications that will explain and communicate the Decline-in-Value review application to the public on the website and social media.</p>	Special Assistant	<p>Website Committee</p> <p>Special Projects</p>	<p>November 30, 2013; offered every October and November thereafter</p>

TAXPAYER ADVOCATE AND CASE MANAGEMENT

Objective VI.3.6: See IT Action Plan V.5: Managing Referrals and Cases for Appraisal Reviews

VII Strategic Focus: Policies and Processes

Action Plans

Action Plan VII.1: Innovate and Revise Processes and Procedures

Background

Completing the Assessment Roll requires consistency in:

- The application of best practices to the conduct of appraisals
- Clarity in translating legal and regulatory mandates into procedures and policies
- Flexibility to permit District Offices and sections to accommodate the unique needs of their property types within legal constraints
- A capacity to incorporate the best ideas of staff in a timely manner to respond to new challenges that arise each year

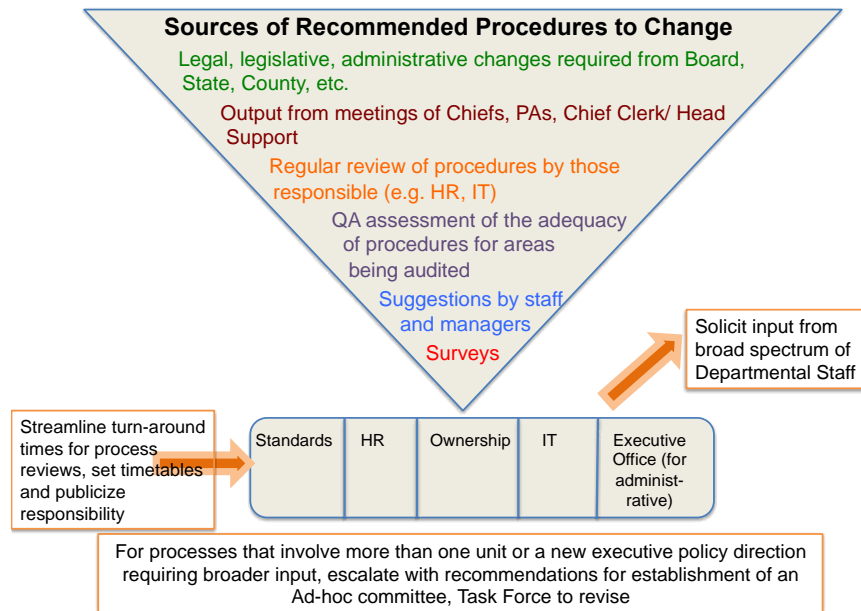
The current process and procedures system has not met all of these criteria.

The Office has a variety of mechanisms in place that generate opportunities for change in the ways we do business. The Standards Division, Human Resources (HR), Information Technology Division (ITD), and Ownership all have some responsibility for updating and managing process and procedural changes. While it might be tempting to establish a coordinator that prioritizes, tracks, monitors progress, and reports on how well those responsibilities are being handled, the Office is looking to increase accountability and ensure that decision-making is made at the lowest appropriate level. A less resource-heavy approach is to emphasize the:

- Ability of staff to communicate and collaborate across the Office at multiple levels in discussing and making business cases for continuous improvement recommendations
- Expectation that all supervisory levels will be held accountable for continuous improvement within their sphere of influence
- Need to intentionally improve the speed, transparency, and communications surrounding process review by those responsible, particularly calling on them to:
 - Track cycle times for revisions and develop approaches to reduce total time
 - Establish and publish communication standards to:
 - Establish clear delineated paths of whom to contact and how and when to do so
 - Respond to suggestions for change, clarifying:
 - The status of procedures that are currently being updated
 - When changes can be expected
 - ... or if no change is expected, why not
 - Pilot use of technology (e.g., surveys, Intranet postings, or blogs) to solicit input on procedural changes

Strategy

Lasting process improvements and creating a culture of continuous process improvements require the involvement of staff in the identification, development, communication, and implementation of the changes. The diagram identifies the Office's sources of recommended procedural changes.



The Office will adopt three elements in the improvement of its process revisions.

Element 1. Focus on the processes of greatest importance to the Office

First is to ensure that the processes and procedures that are most important in the conduct of Assessor business are reviewed and addressed. This review involves expanding the sources of recommendations for change, including approaches that are top-down, bottom-up, structured, and unstructured.

- **Structured:** Chiefs, Principal Appraisers (PA's), and Chief Clerks will meet regularly – initially monthly, moving to quarterly – specifically to:
 - Identify the procedures, forms, and work processes that require attention or change
 - Highlight innovations within their spheres of influence that may be applied more broadly within the Office

While most of the focus will be paid to business processes, administrative processes will also be included. To assist in tracking the results of these meetings, a summary of the discussion and processes and procedures recommended for revision will be distributed to all staff. In addition, a report highlighting accomplishments and issues will be presented to senior management (i.e., Division Chiefs). These regular meetings will continually identify high-priority areas to address.

To ensure that procedures are kept up to date, the organizations responsible for revising procedures (HR, ITD, Standards) will develop an audit schedule, evaluating regularly whether a set of procedures requires major, minor, or no changes.

- *Unstructured:* The units (HR, ITD, Standards) responsible for procedural changes will solicit input broadly from staff using, for example, suggestion systems, surveys, or the Assessor Intranet, providing multiple opportunities for staff members to identify areas that changes can or should be made. Current sources of procedural reviews (e.g., legal mandates, QA identification of procedural changes, and executive staff input) will continue.

Element 2. Improve the Office's revision process

The second element involves improving the revision process itself – shortening the cycle time from identification of the need for change to issuance, providing more opportunities for input from staff for selected procedures, and using technology (surveys, blogs, web-links, emails) to begin two-way communication on procedural improvements. The precise changes required will vary from unit to unit responsible for the functions, and will involve a trial-and-error period while the changes are being implemented. In addition, where coordination among ITD, Standards, and Ownership is required, the Assessor will continue the current process of convening *ad-hoc* committees or task forces to oversee changes.

Element 3. Involve staff and ensure staff are fully informed about policy and procedural changes and updates

Finally, there is a need to ensure that all involved staff, including Clerical, Ownership and Exemptions staff, are completely informed about changes and updated policies and procedures. Designing an integrated approach to this effort that incorporates best practices requires a coordinated strategic effort.

Expected Outcomes/Benefits

The integrity of the Assessor is based in large measure on ensuring that all appraisals are conducted in a fair and professional manner, and that the Assessment Roll is produced on time and accurately. An important tool in that effort is to establish a program in which:

- Policies and procedures are maintained up to date
- Communications about the existing policies and procedures and changes to them are regularly disseminated to staff
- Innovations to improve efficiency are considered, assessed, and where appropriate, replicated throughout the Office

Goal VII.1: By March 2013, complete a system to regularly consider and propose changes to procedures and processes

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
<i>Objective VII.1.1: By February 2013, begin regular meetings of the Division Chiefs to identify changes</i>			
A. Establish a schedule of meetings for Chiefs to discuss process or procedural changes and improvements to the quality of customer service.	Assistant Assessor, Op	Chiefs	January 2013
B. Create a standard format for reporting results of meetings, including status of previous discussions and changes, issues discussed, and responsibility for follow-up for SharePoint hosting	Chiefs	ITD	February 2013
C. Solicit input in advance of meetings from subordinate staff	Chiefs	PAs Directors	Ongoing
D. Hold meetings; document discussions and develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. List of procedures that require attention from Standards, ITD, HR, or Ownership b. Recommendations to the Executive Team about changes that require additional guidance or do not fall within the purview of current procedural review units 	Chiefs		Monthly for first 6 months; may move to quarterly at the discretion of the Chiefs thereafter
E. Document and disseminate notes of the meeting to subordinate staff	Chiefs		Within a week of the meetings held
F. Provide a status report to the Executive Team detailing areas recommended for change, and the outcomes to date	Chiefs		Semi-annually

Objective VII.1.2: By March, 2013, set up a quarterly meeting of PAs

A. Assign two Chiefs responsibility for coordinating PA meetings. One Chief will coordinate PA meetings for Real Property; the other Chief will coordinate PA meetings for Personal Property. These Chief assignments should rotate annually.	Assistant Assessor, Op		February 2013 and annually thereafter
B. Establish a schedule of meetings; establish separate meetings for PAs responsible for Real Property and Personal Property	Assigned Chiefs		February 2013 and annually thereafter

Goal VII.1: By March 2013, complete a system to regularly consider and propose changes to procedures and processes

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
C. Create a standard format for reporting results of meetings, including status of previous discussions and changes, issues discussed, and responsibility for follow-up for SharePoint hosting	PAs	ITD	March 2013
D. Solicit opinions from PAs, Division Chiefs' meetings, etc., to develop meeting agenda	Assigned Chiefs	Directors	March 2013 and quarterly thereafter
E. Conduct meetings; disseminate report to staff and Chiefs as appropriate	PAs	Assigned Chiefs	March 2013 and quarterly thereafter
<i>Objective VII.1.3: By March 2013, set up quarterly meetings, including Chief Clerks and Head Support</i>			
A. Establish a schedule of meetings for Chief Clerks and Head Supports to discuss process or procedural changes	Assistant Assessor, Operations		February 2013
B. Solicit input in advance of meetings from subordinate staff	CC/HS	Clerks Directors	Ongoing
C. Create a standard format for reporting results of meetings, including status of previous discussions and changes, issues discussed, and responsibility for follow-up for SharePoint hosting	CC/HS	ITD	March 2013
D. Hold meetings; document discussions and develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. List of procedures that require attention from Standards, ITD, HR, or Ownership b. Recommendations to Division Chiefs or the Executive Team about changes that require additional guidance or do not fall within the purview of current procedural review units 	CC/HS		Quarterly
E. Document and disseminate notes of the meeting to subordinate staff	CC/HS		Within a week of the meetings held
F. Provide a status report to the Division Chiefs or the Executive Team, detailing areas recommended for change and the outcomes to date	CC/HS		Semi-annually

Action Plan VII.2: Improve Communication of Processes and Procedures

Goal VII.2: By September 2013, improve communication associated with Policy and Procedures, including keeping staff updated on changes

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
<i>Objective VII.2.1: By September 2013, design an approach to improve understanding and adoption of new and existing policies and procedures</i>			
A. Establish a Policies and Procedures Task Force (PPTF) to research and recommend new communications approaches to disseminating Policy and Procedures, including changes and amendments.	Executive Team	Directors	March 2013
B. Conduct best practices research on policy and procedures communications strategies used by other organizations	PPTF	HR	June 2013
C. Evaluate ways to improve understanding and adoption of new and existing policies and procedures. Recommend changes, as necessary, in the design of the approach to training and communications, the assignment of accountability, and the organizational placement of the function. Address needs of appraisers, Clerical, and Ownership staff	PPTF	HR	September 2013
D. Review, amend, or approve recommended approaches	Executive Team	PPTF	October 2013
E. Begin implementation of revised approach	Executive Team	PPTF HR	November 2013

VIII Strategic Focus: Metrics and Accountability

Action Plans

Action Plan VIII.1: Metrics Dashboard

Background

Currently, the Assessor manages its workload using an Annual Work Plan that allocates Assessor work hours to the total workload required to prepare the Assessment Roll. Data are available to the management team that delineates progress to date, but significant calculations are required to determine what adjustments needed to be made to accommodate fluctuations that would normally occur in ensuring on-time completion of the Assessment Roll. There are no regular, easy-to-read reports that delineate, for example:

- Progress against plan in total hours spent or in properties appraised
- Year-to-date progress compared to previous years, by types of property
- Percent of remaining hours available compared to percent of properties not yet appraised
- Filled and budgeted positions by section as compared to previous years
- Filled and budgeted positions by section as compared to plan
- Number of Assessment Appeals Board (AAB) cases as compared to previous years by District Offices

Developing reports that provide such information will permit improved management of the production of the Assessment Roll, allowing more effective reassignment of resources to areas of greatest need at the appropriate time given production necessities.

In addition, including budgetary data will permit a better capacity to: a) manage financial resources and b) compare the productivity of the Office to California jurisdictional benchmarks.

There are other opportunities for metric development in whether the Office meets customer service standards in areas such as caller wait time, visitor wait time, calls abandoned, and overall satisfaction with Assessor courtesy and service levels.

Finally, as the Strategic Plan is implemented, additional metrics will be helpful to track the effectiveness of the Strategic Plan and progress in accomplishing the goals and objectives.

Strategy

The Office will develop a Dashboard that will assist management (i.e., Executive Team, Division Chiefs, and Section Heads) to manage productivity and the quality of customer service. The initial Dashboard will be launched as a pilot with limited information as soon as possible, including as many of the items

listed in the “Background” description as possible. During the next year, additional data elements will be added as they are identified by management.

Expected Outcomes/Benefits

When the Dashboard is completed, the Office will be better able to:

- Manage workload
- Devote resources to the areas that are most in need
- Ensure that overtime is targeted only to the most important objectives
- Help identify areas where training or development of staff should best be targeted

Goal VIII.1: Set up a working Dashboard with production metrics by March 2013

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
<i>Objective VIII.1.1: Develop high-level definition of metrics to be included in a Dashboard by January 2013</i>			
A. Set up a Metrics Working Group (MWG), including representatives from Appraisal and Production Support units	Assistant Assessor		December 2012
B. Establish a Business Intelligence Working Team	Executive Management	ITD	January 2013
C. Verify up to 8 items to be included in the initial Dashboard, maintaining a list of items that are not yet capable of being included because of data limitations	MWG		January 2013
D. Research Dashboard options available via COGNOS	Project Management	ITD	December 2012
E. Present options for decision by the Executive Team	MWG	Project Management	January 2013
F. Complete decision-making on design elements (e.g., traffic light, color coding, etc.)	MWG	Project Management	January 2013
G. Acquire COGNOS license	ITD	ISD	January 2013
H. Train identified ITD staff in COGNOS querying	Project Management	Management Services	January/February 2013
<i>Objective VIII.1.2: Begin migrating data into Data Warehouse February 28, 2013</i>			
A. Determine parameters for exception highlighting for Dashboard items (e.g., on-target, early caution, warning)	MWG	QA, Executive Team	February 2013

Goal VIII.1: Set up a working Dashboard with production metrics by March 2013

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
B. Migrate Time and Volume data into the Data Warehouse	ITD	MWG	February 2013
C. Identify other data elements that need to be migrated into the Data Warehouse design import (e.g., AAB schedule)	Project Management	ITD	February 2013
D. Develop schedule, and migrate other elements into the Data Warehouse	ITD	Project Management	March 2013

Objective VIII.1.3: Complete migration of data and populate Initial Pilot Dashboard pages with metrics by March 31, 2013

A. Design and test report queries for initial data to be reported	Project Management	ISD, MWG	March 2013
B. Populate and review initial Dashboard with the Executive Team	Project Management	MWG, Executive Team	March 2013

Objective VIII.1.4: Implement Dashboard Enhancement Effort by March 31, 2014

A. Establish and publicize a process to solicit input from the Executive Team, Division Chiefs, and Section Heads regarding Dashboard metrics to be added	MWG		May 2013
B. Identify up to four additional outreach efforts seeking metrics currently being used by Division Chiefs, Section Heads, Managers, QA, and Assessor industry groups or peers (e.g., management reports currently being produced off-line and used by Division Chiefs and Managers)	MWG	Chiefs	May 2013
C. Schedule and implement outreach, based on the prior Action Step B	MWG		May 2013
D. Train staff members on how to set up their own personalized Dashboard using pre-issued queries, and how to request from MWG additional metrics	ITD		May 2013 and ongoing
E. Hold bi-weekly meetings to prioritize requests and submit to Project Management	MWG	Project Management	June 2013 and ongoing

Goal VIII.1: Set up a working Dashboard with production metrics by March 2013

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
F. Issue monthly releases of the Dashboard, specifying new metrics/searches available	Project Management		August 2013
G. Evaluate status of the Dashboard, and determine appropriate approach to continue availability of required metrics	MWG	Project Management	July 2014

Action Plan VIII.2: Data Maintenance

Background

The Office responsibilities require the gathering and management of data associated with properties valued at greater than \$1.1 trillion. The data must be available to more than 1,000 staff members, and must be managed so that it is up-to-date, accurate, and useful for establishing accurate values for properties.

Some of the data maintained are not regularly updated, reducing the efficiency of Appraisers as they seek out information on properties from multiple sources to ensure accuracy. In the course of business, some changes to data originate in paper format, and are not quickly reflected so that all data are up to date and readily available. For some of the databases, only the most recent information is maintained, making trend analyses difficult. Keeping effective records is particularly important, because the Office is increasingly using Computer Assisted Mass Appraisals (CAMA) as a productivity tool.

Strategies

As an initial step, we will issue procedures that call for appraisers to update the databases as they complete appraisals, ensuring that data on properties are properly recorded going forward.

Expected Outcomes/Benefits

This effort will allow us to improve the quality of the appraisals, and the efficiency of our staff in developing an accurate and timely Assessment Roll.

Goal VIII.2: By July 2013, initiate ongoing effort to maintain databases by Appraisers as they complete their work

Objectives/Milestones/Action Steps	Lead	Support	Timeframe
<i>Objective VIII.2.1: Establish procedures that delineate Appraisers' responsibilities to update data on properties as they complete appraisals by July 2013</i>			
A. Assign the project to Standards Section	Executive Team, Standards	ITD	January 2013
B. Develop, clear, and disseminate procedures on updating the Property Database (PDB)	Standards		March 2013
C. Train Appraisers on how to update data in appropriate systems	HR	Standards ITD	June 2013
D. Implement procedures	Assistant Assessor		July 2013
E. Audit compliance with procedures	QA		Ongoing, starting July 2013
F. Evaluate impact of ongoing data updating system, and recommend alternatives where necessary	Assistant Assessor	ITD	July 2015

IX Action Plan Implementation

Action Plans

The Office of the Assessor is committed to strategic planning. The Office Strategic Plan consists of Action Plans that outline strategic initiatives for the next two years. Although each Action Plan outlines what, why, and when Action Steps should be completed and by whom, as living documents, they require coordination and monitoring to ensure success. To that end, this document outlines how to manage and monitor implementation, and update and refine Action Steps as progress is made and lessons are learned.

Overall Implementation Responsibility and Participation

Executive Team as Strategic Champions

The Executive Team provides overall leadership and guidance to the Office-wide strategic-planning effort. The Executive Team consists of:

- Assessor
- Chief Deputy Director
- Assistant Assessors
- Directors and Administration Deputy

The Executive Team should meet at least monthly during the first year to review and discuss specifically updates on progress made against the Action Plans. Depending on the agenda, the Executive can invite any other involved Office staff to attend.

Each member of the Executive Team has championed one or more Strategic Focus Areas, serving as Strategic Champions (Champions). As such, they have overall responsibility for the implementation of their respective Action Plans, including monitoring the overall implementation process and ensuring linkage to the budgeting process and Management Appraisal & Performance Plan (MAPP) goals.

Action Plan Leads

The Champions should assign an Action Plan Lead for each Action Plan. The initial Action Plans propose logical Leads as a starting point. The intent is to suggest ultimate responsibility; certain aspects may be delegated to support staff or units, or to individuals below the level of the Lead.

Certain day-to-day working relationships should be formally developed to address issues and decisions that span across Office organizational or operational lines. For example, in some situations, one or more

Divisions may need to work together to address an initiative. The Executive Team can use the “Lead” model by identifying the Lead entity and defining how it will work with others. Issues that the Lead cannot resolve can be taken to the Executive Team.

Stakeholder Advisory Role

The Office has many stakeholders, both internal and external to the County family. The Office should regularly solicit advice and input regarding relevant strategic planning efforts from various stakeholders’ perspectives. The Executive Team should provide updates on progress made against the Action Plans for:

- The Board of Supervisors
- Involved or affected County Departments
- External stakeholders outside of the County, but that are associated with or affected by Office operations, policies, etc.

Action Plan Review and Implementation

Each Action Plan lists Action Steps, time frames, accountability points, and outcomes. Some of the Action Plans complement each other and should build on the successes of each other. Therefore, they should be implemented systematically and not piece meal.

Step 1: Review and Accept Recommendations in Principle

The “Action Plan Implementation Accountability Matrix and Timeline” at the end of this chapter presents:

- An overview of the 8 Strategic Focus Areas
- Their respective Action Plans and Objectives
- The assigned Strategic Champion and Lead for each Action Plan
- A priority rating
- Time line, by calendar quarter (Q1 = January, February, March)

The Action Plans present the intended strategic thrust without being too prescriptive regarding the details. Therefore, the Executive Team should review the Action Plans and Action Steps one by one and ***accept them in principle***.

Action Plans can be modified as suggested by group consensus or as required to meet specific constraints, such as availability of resources. All Action Steps in the Action Plans should be accepted, rejected, or modified; none should be ignored.

Most important is the Office’s commitment to continual improvement in its quest to be the “*the premier property agency in the nation*”. The recommendations set forth a pathway for implementing change and continual improvements.

Step 2: Prioritization

The Executive Team should prioritize the Action Plans across the Office. For each Action Plan, in most cases:

- Implementation of the recommendations with immediate priority should commence as soon as possible.
- Intermediate priority recommendations can be deferred until actions of the higher priority recommendations are under way.
- In some cases, lower priority recommendations may be implemented earlier because they are easy to accomplish and may result in some “quick victories.”

Other high-priority recommendations may be implemented later once the Office has established more of a foundation for success. The Champions and Leads can refine the cost implications, depending on the course of action Executive Team adopts.

Step 3: Implement and Monitor Progress

Once the Executive Team approves the Action Plans, Leads should begin implementing the Action Steps. Each Lead should prepare a brief (one-page) monthly report concerning the progress of each Action Plan for the Champion and Executive Team. As the Leads identify adjustments necessary to the Action Plans, they should alert the Champion in their monthly reports; the Champion and/or the Executive Team can then determine if they need to intervene or not.

Performance Metrics

The Executive Team should also identify a manageable number of key performance metrics to monitor during the implementation process. The Action Plan objectives are a logical foundation for these metrics.

Pre-Set Meeting Dates and Times

Strategic Focus Area Teams. Each Champion should meet with their Lead(s) monthly on a pre-set date (e.g., the last Wednesday of every month) and monitor progress against the Action Plans, taking corrective measures on a real-time basis. These meetings should be scheduled for two hours to ensure adequate time to discuss and resolve issues.

Executive Team. The Executive Team should meet monthly, also on a pre-set date, to:

- Monitor Action Plan progress
- Require Champions to provide general progress reports on Action Plan progress
- Invite the Lead(s) representing a Strategic Focus Area, one per month, to discuss progress against their Action Plans
 - Note: The Lead(s) from each of the eight Strategic Focus Areas will meet a minimum of twice per year with the Executive Team.

Strategic Plan 2013-2015

- Invite the Lead(s) for particularly important or complex Action Plans to deliver subsequent updates with greater frequency
- Invite all Lead(s) for an Office-wide review of Action Plan progress overall
- Address any special needs that Leads have identified regarding Action Plans

Step 4: Annual Action Plan Updates

The Executive Team, Champions, and Leads should review and update the Action Plans at least once a year to incorporate progress to date, “lessons learned,” adjustments made, and overall successes and setbacks.

Adjustments to the Action Plans should be made as agreed-to and as appropriate, but typically should occur toward the end of the fiscal year in preparation for the next year and as input to the budgeting process.

Integration with Other Office Plans

The Office has other planning documents that should be revised and updated to link to the Strategic Plan, the strategic objectives, and Action Plans, such as:

Office Planning Document	Description of these Planning Components	Lead Responsibility
Budget	It is critical that the budgeting process is linked to the Strategic Plan and Action Plan initiatives. Without such a linkage, the Action Plans are likely to stagnate and little will be accomplished. For example, if not budgeted, technology enhancements cannot occur. The Office will need to sustain its day-to-day operations in the budget; however, other areas will need to demonstrate how they support the strategic initiatives. The lack of ability to demonstrate a linkage to the strategic initiatives may cause some long-standing functions to receive less funding versus others that can directly show their impact on the strategic initiatives. The timing for some of the Action Steps may be modified, pending availability of funds.	Assistant Assessors
Staffing and Human Resources Plans	Human Resources planning and processes should support the Strategic Plan by analyzing work allocation, staffing levels, anticipated staff turnover, staff development and training, and related professional and staff requirements.	Administrative Deputy

Strategic Plan 2013-2015

Office Planning Document	Description of these Planning Components	Lead Responsibility
IT Plan	Technology is an important component to customer service, transparency, accountability, process improvements, timely turnarounds, and related efficiencies. Effective use of technology to produce the necessary automated systems, reports, data, etc. is critical to the strategic initiatives.	ITD and Business Solutions Group (BSG)
Organizational Structure	Just as <u>form</u> follows <u>function</u> in architecture, <u>structure</u> follows <u>strategy</u> . The Office's overall organizational structure should support the Strategic Plan initiatives.	Executive Team
Management Appraisal & Performance Plan (MAPP)	The objectives in the Action Plans should form the foundation for the MAPP goals for management.	Executive Team

Office of the Assessor: Action Plan Implementation Accountability Matrix and Timeline

Action Plan	Strategic Champion	Lead	Priority Status	2013				2014				2015					
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
STRATEGIC FOCUS I: NURTURING AN ETHICAL CULTURE																	
I.1: Code of Conduct	Steven Hernandez	Executive Team															
I.2: Enforcement and Protection of Employees and the Public																	
Objective I.2.1: See Positive Culture Transformation Action Plan III, Objective 1.5: By Q4 2014, Formalize the Office Staff Advocate (Ombudsman) Position			See Culture Action Plan III, Objective 1.5														
Objective I.2.2: By September 2013, establish an Ethics Officer and an Ethics Review Board			Warrants Further Exploration														
Objective I.2.3: By September 2013, establish a Quality Assurance/Internal Audit unit																	
Objective I.2.4: By June 2014, establish an enforcement code and process for taxpayers and third-party agents who attempt to influence the development, result, or review of an appraisal, exemption, ownership investigation or other assessment issue through coercion, bribery, extortion, or intimidation.																	
Objective I.2.5: See IT Action Plan V.5: Managing Referrals and Cases for Appraisal Reviews			See IT Action Plan V.5														
I.3: Training and Development on Ethics																	
I.4: Restoring Public Trust																	
I.5: Gift and Gratuity Policy			George Renkei	Special Assistant / Jeff Prang													
STRATEGIC FOCUS II: FISCAL FORECASTING MODEL																	
II.1: Developing a Fiscal Forecasting Model	Executive Team	Assistant Assessors															
STRATEGIC FOCUS III: POSITIVE CULTURE TRANSFORMATION																	
III.1: Improve, Formalize, and Standardize Internal Communication and Customer Service	Fred Chisholm	PACT															
Objective III.1.1: In Q1 2013, Develop and Implement a Strategic Plan Roll-Out Strategy - See PACT Action Plan VI.2, Goal 2: Support the Implementation of the Strategic Plan			See PACT Action Plan VI.2														
Objective III.1.2: By Q2, 2014, Develop and Implement an Office-wide Communication Plan																	
Objective III.1.3: By Q2 2013, Develop and Implement Processes and Standards to Ensure the Office Organizational Chart is Kept Current																	
Objective III.1.4: By Q2, Create Office Point of Contact List and Processes for Keeping it Up-to-date																	

Office of the Assessor: Action Plan Implementation Accountability Matrix and Timeline

Action Plan	Strategic Champion	Lead	Priority Status	2013				2014				2015			
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Objective III.1.5: By Q4 2014, Formalize the Office Staff Advocate (Ombudsman) Position			Warrants Further Exploration												
III.2: Develop and Formalize a Comprehensive Staff Development Program		Training													
III.3: Develop and Formalize an Office Morale Program		Human Resources													
STRATEGIC FOCUS IV: HUMAN CAPITAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT															
IV.1: Recruiting and Developing Individuals with Ethical Orientations	Steven Hernandez	Administrative Deputy													
IV.2: Professional Development and Succession Planning		Division Chiefs													
IV.3: Chain of Command and Delegation of Authority		Executive Team													
STRATEGIC FOCUS V: TECHNOLOGY AND IT															
V.1: Business Solutions Process and Structure	Kurt Gensicke	Business Solutions Group													
V.2: Short-Term Business Solutions															
Objective V.2.1: Update the website as an initial short-term business solution, focusing on the Office of the Assessor and property tax portal															
V.3: Medium-Term Business Solutions															
V.4: Transformational Business Solutions															
V.5: Managing Referrals and Cases for Appraisal Reviews															
STRATEGIC FOCUS VI: PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND COMMUNICATION TEAM (PACT)															
VI.1: Create a professional Public Affairs & Communications Team (PACT)	Executive Team	PACT	Warrants Further Exploration												
Objective VI.1.1: By March 2013, formally create a professional Public Affairs & Communications Team (PACT).															
VI.2: Support the implementation of the Strategic Plan and respond specifically to other APTs' outlined initiatives for the PACT															
Objective VI.2.1: By December 2013, improve employees' knowledge of the Strategic Plan, based on 10-point scale with an overall average rating of 7 or higher.															
Objective VI.2.2: By December 2014, improve the public's perceptions of the Office of the Assessor by 10%, based on an independent survey results conducted in 2013 and 2014.			Warrants Further Exploration												
VI.3: Develop specific Action Plan initiatives for how the PACT can best serve the Office of the Assessor in the next two years			Warrants Further Exploration												
Objective VI.3.1: Each July, develop a Public Affairs Master Plan															
Objective VI.3.2: Re-engage key stakeholders and, by June 2014, complete four public education and outreach programs on specific issues															

Office of the Assessor: Action Plan Implementation Accountability Matrix and Timeline

Action Plan	Strategic Champion	Lead	Priority Status	2013				2014				2015			
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Objective VI.3.3: Supporting the Executive Team's policy priorities and initiatives through consistent and clearly communicated messaging and materials directed toward managers and employees.															
Objective VI.3.4: Re-establish and improve cooperative relationships and partnerships with other County and external government agencies. Re-institute sharing of information with the Board of Supervisors, other governmental agencies, cities, and school districts and monitoring state legislation.			Warrants Further Exploration												
Objective VI.3.5: Present a favorable image of the Office and our services to the public using a variety of channels including print literature, news media, and electronic communication.			Warrants Further Exploration												
Objective VI.3.6: See IT Action Plan V.5: Managing Referrals and Cases for Appraisal Reviews			See IT Action Plan V.5												
STRATEGIC FOCUS VII: POLICIES AND PROCESSES															
VII.1: Innovate and Revise Processes and Procedures		Chiefs													
Objective VII.1.1: By February 2013, begin a regular meeting of the chiefs to identify changes															
Objective VII.1.2: By March, 2013, set up a quarterly meeting of PAs															
Objective VII.1.3: By March 2013, set up a quarterly meeting including Chief Clerks and Head Support	Sharon Moller														
VII.2: Improve Communication of Processes and Procedures		PPTF													
Objective VII.2.1: By September 2013, design an approach to improve understanding and adoption of new and existing policies and procedures															
STRATEGIC FOCUS VIII: METRICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY															
VIII.1: Metrics Dashboard		Metrics Working Group													
Objective VIII.1.1: Develop high-level definition of metrics to be included in a Dashboard by January 2013															
Objective VIII.1.2: Begin migrating data into Data Warehouse February 28, 2013															
Objective VIII.1.3: Complete migration of data and populate Initial Pilot Dashboard pages with metrics by March 31, 2013															
Objective VIII.1.4: Implement Dashboard Enhancement Effort by March 31, 2014	Julie Apfel														
VIII.2: Data Maintenance		Standards													
Objective VIII.2.1: Establish procedures that delineate Appraiser responsibilities to update data on properties as they complete appraisals by July 2013															